

TOP STORY: THE DATE RAPE DEBATE

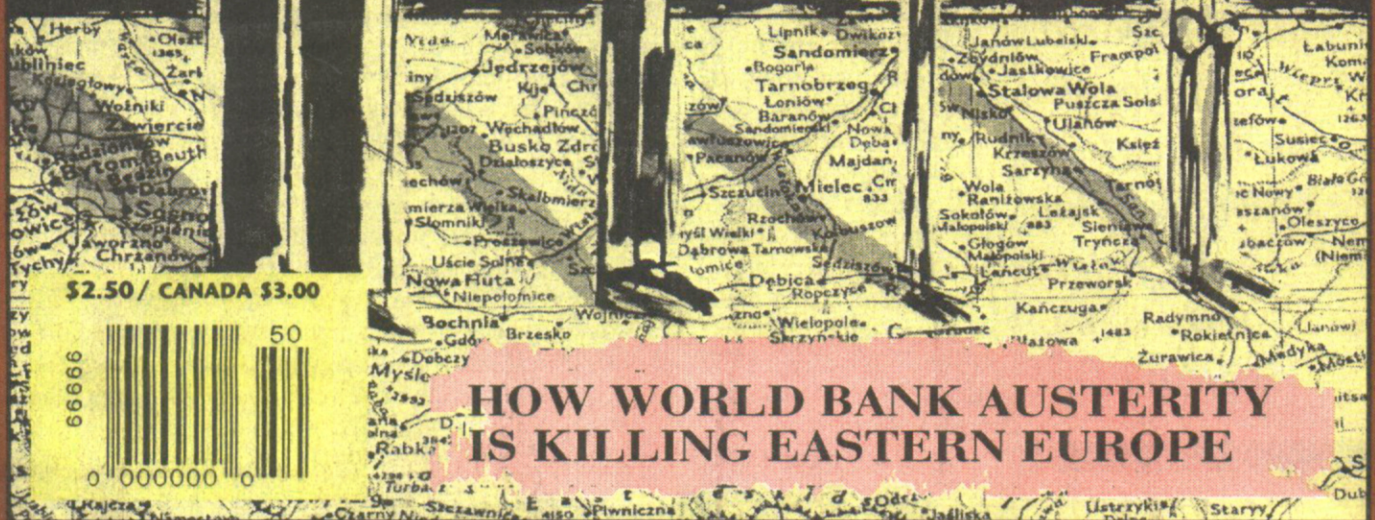
December 13 - 26, 1993

In THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

STARVATION

DIET



EDITORIAL

A TIME FOR NEW BEGINNINGS

The start of *In These Times*' 18th year marks a time of new beginnings, both for our magazine and for the left in America and the world.

In our own small bailiwick we are celebrating the successful completion of a refinance. Last June, we decided that we could not continue to publish beyond the end of the year unless we were able to pay off our long-term debts and secure \$90,000 or more of operating capital. Miraculously, in five months we raised some \$340,000—just about all of it from our subscribers. We are grateful to all those who helped us survive, from donors to patient creditors such as the members of the National Writers Union.

Now we are able to proceed on a new basis. For the first time, *In These Times* has a budget that provides for growth

**In These Times,
along with
leftists throughout the world,
faces the
daunting task
of challenging
our rulers
with a new
world-view.**

and improvements over a five-year period. And we have money in the bank to guarantee us a running start.

Most of that money will be used to get more readers. Over the next five years, we hope to more than double the number of subscribers, especially among the various political and social action groups that constitute our primary constituencies. To that end, we have a range of efforts in the works. And because much of our promotion efforts cannot be done through commercial

methods, we hope, once again, to have your help—this time in reaching new readers.

In These Times' problems in past years were at least in part a reflection of the general confusion, disarray and demoralization on the left in the United States. But we hope that the amazing response to our refinance effort reflects a new determination to create true alternatives to the politics of the corporate bottom line.

On the world scene, as we've observed these last few months, the reaction to the post-communist surge of extreme free-market capitalism has already begun. Confusingly, gropingly, but nevertheless clearly, opposition to American-style capitalism is on the rise, and along with it appreciation of the underlying principles of socialism. This was reflected in recent elections in Lithuania, Poland and Greece, as well as in a recent papal interview.

(See story on page 18.) And it is reflected in

intellectual circles in books like Albert Michel's *Capitalism vs. Capitalism*.

So, too, obscurely and only incipiently, is there hope in the awful, bloody failure of nationalism in Eastern Europe. When communism collapsed, dragging socialism down with it, nationalism emerged as the only seemingly viable alternative to American-style capitalism. But while nationalism swept the field as a way of striking back at past discrimination and oppression, the experience of increasingly inhumane and vicious conflicts is now rapidly creating a new backlash. Even in the former Yugoslavia, Serbs as well as Muslims are beginning to have second thoughts about the cost of attaining national purity—and about whether that goal is the route to the good life.

Here in America, our domestic form of nationalism—identity politics—had, in the '80s, virtually replaced efforts to develop a world-view that could challenge rampant individualism and corporate greed. But the Clinton administration, which has consistently allied itself with the corporate agenda, is rapidly exposing the limits of identity politics. With Ron Brown heading the Commerce Department and Henry Cisneros at HUD, one can hardly argue that racial or ethnic balance must lead to progressive politics. And with Attorney General Janet Reno approving the FBI's slaughter of children at Waco, one wonders how a man in that position could have done worse. While it was, and is, preferable to have a Democrat in the White House, the one we have sides with corporate America and against working people on all but the most marginal of issues.

In short, the need for a world-view to challenge the unquestioned principles and premises of the great majority of our political leaders is emerging more clearly with each passing day. In the next five years, *In These Times* plans to be part of that process, and we invite you to join us as partners.

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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InTHESE TIMES

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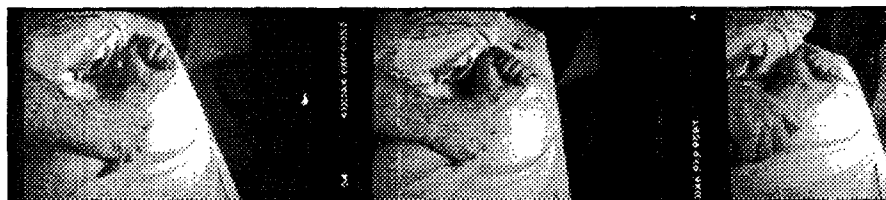
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LETTERS

Confrontation or consensus

Your editorial "Clinton's health plan is bad medicine" (Oct. 18) is no doubt correct in its comparison of "managed competition" vs. the "single payer" approach. But to attempt to take the "ideal" high road on such a contentious issue as health care would be tantamount to committing political suicide. Under the current political circumstances, there is absolutely no possibility of passing single-payer legislation through Congress. Rather than confronting Congress and the special-interest lobbies in a bloody no-win situation that would paralyze the remaining three years of the Clinton presidency, the president has proposed a health care plan based on a plausible consensus of the different elements in the complex equation.

Hal Kleinman

Chair, Democrats Abroad-Munich

Something like socialism

I very much enjoyed John B. Judis' article on unemployment (*ITT*, Nov. 1).

Others recognize the seriousness of the current situation, one in which the demands of capital accumulation have outstripped the responsiveness of the institutions designed to facilitate it. This appears to be an inherent feature of industrial capitalism. Once every generation or so, changes in the business realm get far ahead of those in the political, social and intellectual realms. Getting the latter to accommodate the former is a wrenching process.

The question is not *if* global capitalism is in crisis, but *what form* capitalism will take after the crisis has been met. I'm torn between two possible alternatives. The first is a global Keynesianism in which demand-enhancing institutions are established to balance

globalized business corporations. This would require a renewed commitment to the expansion of planning that—as Judis notes—is not on the agenda right now. But it would be an extension rather than a repudiation of the past 50 years. Therefore, it could make an appearance sooner than one might expect.

The second alternative is a qualitatively different arrangement in which consumerism is replaced with something quite different—progress defined as improvement in the relational and qualitative aspects of life. Work as the primary shaper of social values would be the focus of such activity. Environmentalism, workplace democracy and various religious movements (particularly Catholic social teaching) provide inklings of this possible new world.

I lean toward the latter alternative because I sense that consumerism is unsustainable—both materially and spiritually. It's been a great experiment whose costs have very possibly outweighed the benefits. (Of course, we could get to the second alternative by passing through the first.)

Either way, 20 years from now (perhaps even sooner) inhabitants of the advanced industrialized nations will live in a very different world. It could even resemble socialism.

John Jordan

Public Affairs Department
Laborers' International
Union of North America

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



Jewish arrogance

I'm partly Jewish and partly Christian and deeply opposed to anti-Semitism. I'm therefore appalled by Arthur D. Kahn's letter about rap music and the African-American community (ITT, Nov. 1).

In *These Times* recently published several articles indicating there are widely differing attitudes toward rap among black Americans. Nevertheless, Kahn criticized "the black community" in general for a pattern of cultural evolution which he claims has replaced an appreciation for jazz with an affinity for rap—music that he associates with anti-Semitism, a rising incidence of rape and other violent crimes, the Crown Heights disturbances in Brooklyn, and recent killings by young criminals of foreign tourists in Miami.

To the outraged letter writer, all these phenomena, beginning with rap's popularity, supposedly prove that "the black community isn't doing its job correctly." The letter also suggests that African-Americans might do better by looking to the example set by "other minorities"—which seems, from the context, to refer to Asians, Hispanics and white ethnic groups, including Jews.

I may be wrong to assume that the writer is Jewish, but to me the letter offers the apparent spectacle of a Jewish-American leftist, out of outrage over Crown Heights, angrily telling all of black America what music to enjoy and how to behave.

In the view of African-American scholar Harold Cruse, author of the seminal work *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, the perceived arrogance of some Jews telling blacks what to do was one important cause of resentment and division within the American left during the Communist Party/Popular Front days of the '30s. Whatever the merits in Cruse's portrayal, a black-Jewish split definitely did reach the breaking point within



many left-wing organizations during the '60s, with explosive results.

More recently, conflicts have flared as some black activists, responding to Jewish criticism over their association with the Rev. Louis Farrakhan, have defiantly replied that they have a right to associate with anyone they please.

I find it incredible that your letter writer is engaging in exactly the kind of obnoxiously patronizing behavior that Cruse criticized so eloquently more than 20 years ago.

If the writer was personally victimized by the Crown Heights violence, his rage is understandable—but it's not helpful to anyone, including American Jews. If Harold Cruse's criticisms of Jewish leftists could be reduced to a single negative stereotype, Kahn would seem to be striving to fit that stereotype exactly.

Speaking of stereotypes, your letter writer should realize that the "black community" is not monolithic on every issue, any more than the American Jewish community is. Salim Muwakkil's reporting has been demonstrating this for years.

Andy Feeney
Washington, D.C.

Low salaries

In "Funding conundrum" (ITT, Nov. 1), Joel Bleifuss makes an impor-

tant point about comparative funding priorities of the right and left for political advocacy. However, he misses the mark when he lays the blame for low salaries on funders.

First, most non-profits—including social-change organizations—receive much more funding from individual contributors than from foundations. And individual contributors, as anyone can attest who has responded to a mail appeal, are chiefly concerned with the organization's cause, and seldom know anything about the salaries of those employed there.

Second, non-profits are more likely to worry about funder reaction to salary levels than the evidence would support. If non-profits *asked* foundations for reactions to salary levels, they would quite likely find their fears unfounded (as did John Stauber in the article). In nine years of finance consulting to both grantseekers and grantmakers, I have yet to see a proposal rejected because of high salary levels.

Instead, the commitment and passion of organizers drive them to spend every dollar on maximizing activity rather than to invest in jobs that will attract and retain talented staff for the lengths of their careers. And because those from communities of color are less likely than their white counterparts to have family safety nets, low salary levels result over time in chasing minority and low-income people out of the field.

Jan Masaoka
Executive Director
Support Center for
Nonprofit Management
San Francisco

Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you wished to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

InSHORT



By Woody Igou

EuroGulag

The *New York Times* reports that German entrepreneur Frank Georgi plans to build a \$60 million theme park in the town of Prinden that will depict East German life before



unification. The park, built for those with "nostalgia for the old days,"

will compel visitors to obey certain "rules of the game"; park employees will serve as secret police agents. Tourists "critical" of the park will be thrown into jail. For added authenticity, clerks and shopkeepers will be trained to be surly and unhelpful.

Why not wait a few years and set up shop in the scary, abandoned site of EuroDisney?

Reach out and tar someone

AT&T recently apologized to employees and to the North Carolina NAACP after a magazine containing a racial slur was distributed to its employees



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CHINA SHOP

Clinton trades human rights away

Since the massacre in Tiananmen Square in 1989, Congress has attempted to use trading privileges to encourage progress on China's abysmal human rights record. Now the Clinton administration wants to reverse that trend, embarking on a program of what it calls "comprehensive engagement" with China. According to a senior State Department official, the United States wants to untether U.S./China relations from the annual, impas-

worldwide, the *Asheville Citizen-Times* reports. The "Fun'N'Games" section of the magazine showed characters on several continents talking by telephone. All the characters were human except the one in Africa, which was depicted as a monkey. The company said the drawing "slipped by" its editors.

Sadly, lots of editors saw it and thought it looked OK.

Guilt trip

From the "Corrections and Clarifications" column of the *Chicago Tribune*: "A caption for a photo accompanying the 'Guilt by association' story in the Oct. 20 *Tribune* incorrectly identified the subject as Daniel Edwards. The photo was of Kent Lane, who was exonerated of all wrongdoing in the case."



Well, he looked guilty enough.

Stunned by a stupid statement? Nauseated by a noxious news item? Livid about a ludicrous lie? Contact the Appall-O-Meter, In These Times, 2040 N. Milwaukee, Chicago, IL 60647.

APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Weightless banality
2. Green Acres stupid
3. Malicious cretinism
4. Howard Sternesque
5. Mary Matalin mean
6. Gangrenous venality
7. A touch of evil
8. A cancer in the Zeitgeist
9. Et tu, Pol Pot?
10. Noiseperson of the Apocalypse

sioned Most Favored Nation debate in Congress.

The Clinton administration insists that it still cares about human rights, and that it hopes for "significant overall progress" in China. But the prevailing sentiment inside the administration is that China's burgeoning economy is too important, and that its regional influence with problematic players such as North Korea is too great, to make human rights the centerpiece of U.S./China relations.

Some Asian nations welcome the new U.S. approach. Dr. Lee Tsao Yuan, a delegate to the recent Asia summit from Singapore, claims that "many Asians do not subscribe to the U.S. view of human rights. Our concern is that human rights have been used as an excuse to restrict trade." She stresses that Asian nations also worry that the notion of tying trade to human rights and democracy is a form of cultural hegemony. "Some in your country might say our government is authoritarian and infringes on personal rights. But at least I have the freedom in Singapore to walk the streets at night in safety."



But human rights advocates express concern about the new strategy. Says Mike Jendrzeczyk of Asia Watch, "We are concerned that the U.S. is selling out too short. The net effect is that the U.S. is bargaining with the Chinese on agreements they have already signed. ... The U.S. is so eager for trade, the Chinese are dictating the terms of their own compliance on human rights conditions. We worry that the U.S. will

appear a paper tiger regarding their threats to revoke trade privileges."

China is not the only transgressor in the region. According to a report distributed by the human rights organization Asia Watch, serious violations of personal liberty have occurred in countries throughout the region, including Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.

Next year's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) conference (held this year in Seattle) will be held in Indonesia, a country that has still not apologized for its massacre of civilians in East Timor. Not surprisingly, nowhere on next year's draft schedule is the formal consideration of human rights in the region.

Clinton paints a vision of the APEC organization as being the foundation of the U.S. presence in the Pacific. Such a notion suggests that the United States, for better or worse, has decided that trade is our highest and most fundamental interest, above and beyond personal liberty and the individual pursuit of happiness.

—April A. Oliver

REDLINING, INSURANCE STYLE

*Companies offer little
security to low-income areas*

out insurance are communities without hope." The insurance availability crisis generating that warning remains with us today.

Although the evidence on insurance redlining is primarily anecdotal, it is compelling. A sales manager for the American Family Insurance Company was tape-recorded telling several agents, "You write too many blacks. ... You gotta sell good, solid, premium-paying white people." American Family is now being sued by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for racial discrimination, in part because of comments like these.

California Insurance Commissioner John Garamendi charged the California Insurance Group (CIG) with 252 violations of that state's redlining laws. The evidence against CIG includes a street map outlining San Francisco's low-income and minority communities along with sworn affidavits from several employees who said they were instructed by their managers to decline any commercial insurance applications for buildings within the circled boundaries. CIG subsequently agreed to pay a \$500,000 fine and undertake several reforms to increase its market in underserved areas.

Missouri Insurance Commissioner Jay Angoff found that insurers providing homeowners coverage in St. Louis over the past five years charged policyholders in low-income minority areas an average of \$6.15 per \$1,000 of coverage, compared to \$4.70 per \$1,000 for policyholders in predominantly white low-income areas.

Research in Chicago and Milwaukee shows that the number of homeowners insurance policies in a community is closely associated with the racial composition of the neighborhood—and the racial effect remains statistically significant even after taking into consideration family income, age and condition of housing, number of housing units, and other demographic variables. Illinois and Wisconsin are two of only four states in the country that require any geographic disclosure of insurance policies (Minnesota and Missouri are the others).

Legal actions are currently pending against at least 10 insurers across the country for alleged redlining and racially discriminatory practices.

In response to redlining charges, the American Insurance Association (AIA) released a study this past June of insurance availability in Atlanta, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Brooklyn. The report concluded that property insurance is widely available. In a survey designed "to project the results to each city as a whole," 98 percent of homeowners reported they carried insurance coverage.

But the study design precluded the AIA from addressing the very issue at the heart of the redlining controversy—whether residents in specific neighborhoods, particularly those with high concentrations of minority residents, are treated unfairly. Conclusions for a "city as a whole" are not valid for specific communities within that city.

Perhaps the most interesting finding of the AIA study was buried in a table near the end of the report. Researchers found that African-Americans were three times as likely as whites (9 percent, as opposed to 3 percent) to purchase their insurance through what is often referred to as a FAIR Plan, an insurance

The "black tax" is alive and well in the property-insurance industry.

Twenty-five years ago, the National Advisory Panel on Insurance in Riot Affected Areas warned that "communities with-

MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

It had to happen

The latest in the television of abundance: FYI-The Consumer Channel, a round-the-clock, all-advertising venue. Look for infomercials, home shopping, short spots and nostalgia shows compiling classic ads. Best of all, you'll be able to order the products advertised, right then and there.

The ad channel makes its debut with plenty of evidence that consumers get a thrill out of browsing and shopping by TV. The infomercial business is doing so well that brand-name sponsors are entering what was heretofore considered a tacky business. Tums is developing what it calls a "docu-mercial" about calcium in your diet. The 30-minute program is, of course, full of hints that Tums can help.

The infomercial business still has plenty of low-down tackiness, though. For instance, producers of a half-hour Christmas infomercial showing kids playing with toys are slyly pretending that the show is for parents, not kids—who are legally protected from such selling.

Meanwhile, studies of home-shopping channels show that the majority of the (mostly female) buyers work outside the home. Most of them are married, and a quarter of them have household incomes over \$55,000. Watch for more catalog services via television, now that merchandisers can see a more upscale audience.

Merge, purge

The news that TV shopping is spreading has to be good news for the many companies now merging and partnering. Phone companies are search-

ing out cable companies to enter the information age together. For example, phone company Bell Atlantic wants to merge with cable powerhouse TCI, while long-distance provider MCI is partnering with Jones Intercable. Other partnering deals are multiplying. The dealmakers promise that competition in both cable and phone service will finally blossom, with an interactive future around the corner.

But many public-interest advocates caution that vertical integration—that is, having control both of the delivery system and the programming on it—could cripple communications innovation. Phone-cable companies could be tempted just to boost cable revenues and bully smaller potential competitors away from their phone business. They could also favor their own program interests and discourage other sources of information.

The feds are not turning a blind eye to the implications of mergers. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) recently intervened in home-shopping channel QVC's attempts to merge with Paramount. The FTC told QVC that it must sever ties with its owner, TCI, before merger talks could go forward. QVC agreed.

But into the financial breach leaped phone company BellSouth, which plans to pool its money with cable companies in a consortium. In a congressional hearing in November, Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-OH) asked if BellSouth would seriously challenge its erstwhile partners if the phone company decided to compete in their cable markets. Good question.

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pool of last resort for those unable to get insurance in the regular market. FAIR Plan policies cost more and provide less coverage than conventional homeowners policies.

What can be done? A first step would be a disclosure requirement, comparable to the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act, which requires mortgage lenders to disclose detailed information on the geographic distribution of mortgage loans and the racial composition of applicants. Two bills in the House of Representatives, one written by Massachusetts Democrat Joseph Kennedy (H.R. 1257) and the other by Illinois Democrat Cardiss Collins (H.R. 1188), address these issues.

Taking another lead from the lending industry, reformers could enact a Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) for insurers—or, since insurance is regulated at the state level, a series of statewide CRAs would be a second step. The CRA requires federally regulated lenders to identify and respond to the credit needs of their entire service areas, including low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. For insurers, approval of rates, new products and even the license to sell policies could be conditioned on meeting the insurance needs of a company's entire market or service area.

Finally, voluntary reinvestment agreements—which several major insurers entered into with neighborhood groups across the country more than 10 years ago—should be pursued more vigorously. In the late '70s and early '80s, National People's Action, a network of community organizations, struck agreements with major insurers to increase the number of insurance policies in distressed areas, generate investments in low-income housing and small business development projects, and implement other community development activities.

Twenty-five years ago, the National Advisory Panel noted that without insurance, banks could not make loans, housing could not be built or repaired and new businesses could not be launched. Without insurance, in other words, communities simply deteriorate. If the nation wants to "keep hope alive" throughout its metropolitan areas, adequate insurance must be available and affordable in all neighborhoods.

—Gregory Squires

ROUGH CUTS

By JA Reid

Women Who Jog With the Dogs



ETC.

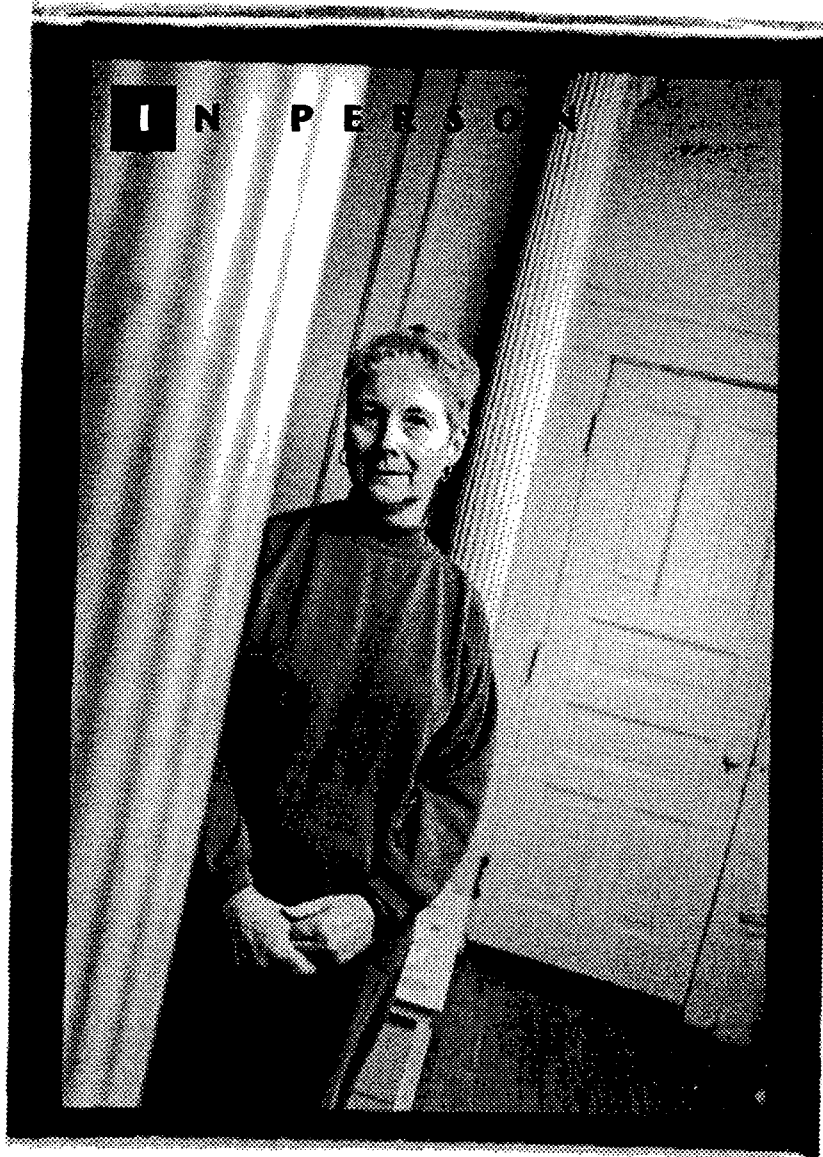
By Miles Harvey

Hungry holidays

So much for George Bush's "thousand points of light." A new report shows that despite a huge increase in private programs for the poor, hunger in the United States has increased by 50 percent since 1985. The report, "Hunger 1994" by the Maryland-based Bread for the World Institute, argues that an end to hunger in this country is impossible without stronger government action.

Since 1980, more than 150,000 private organizations have emerged, distributing \$3 billion to \$4 billion worth of food to hungry Americans annually, according to the report. Nonetheless, approximately 30 million Americans are hungry—more than 10 percent of the population. Almost 37 million people live below the U.S. poverty line, the most at any time since 1962.

"Hunger 1994" points out that food stamp benefit levels are based on a household budget that is 24 percent below participants' actual food expenditures. And the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children—which provides pre- and post-natal care for poor women, thus reducing infant mortality rates and future medical costs—receives only enough spending to reach 60 percent of those eligible. Moreover, the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, which is not indexed for inflation, lost 42 percent of its purchasing power between 1970 and 1991. And the report shows that the median value of AFDC and food stamps combined for



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SISTER ACTIVIST

Donna Quinn serves her God, our Mother

Most of the churchgoers filing into Chicago's Holy Name Cathedral last Mother's Day ignored the 40 or so protesters who held signs reading, "Ordain women or stop baptizing them!" and

"Keep abortion legal!" Undaunted, the woman in the center of the group trumpeted through a bullhorn, "We are outside the church because that's where women stand within the church."

Sister Donna Quinn, 55, a member of the Sinsinawa Order of Dominicans and founder and director of Chicago Catholic Women (CCW), protests outside Holy Name every Mother's Day. Quinn describes CCW as "a group of Catholics of both sexes working toward structural change in the church and society to promote women's interests and human rights." In 1977, CCW tried unsuccessfully to hold a discussion on women's ordination in the Cathedral's school auditorium. In response, the group began asking other Catholic feminists throughout the country to mark Mother's Day by boycotting churches and celebrating women.

a family of three is only 72 percent of the poverty line. The Bread for the World Report comes at the same time as an Urban Institute study, which shows that between 2.5 million and 4.9 million elderly Americans either suffer from hunger or from "food insecurity"—that is, from a situation in which adequate diets are either unavailable, unaffordable or inaccessible.

Bread for the World supports the 1992 "Medford Declaration," which calls for adequate funding of federal food programs, thus eliminating outright hunger within a few years. Supporters say that this would cost the federal government an additional \$10 billion a year, or less than 1 percent of federal spending. The group argues that the money could come from military cutbacks in the aftermath of the Cold War.

Explains David Beckmann, president of the Bread for the World Institute: "Some of the effort devoted to helping hungry people must be channeled toward changing ineffective government policies. ... Government policies can affect hungry people on a scale that dwarfs the impact of private assistance. By calling loudly and strongly for the government to do its part, private citizens can transform the politics of hunger."

What's at the root of the current hunger crisis? The report notes that between 1981 and 1983 programs serving low-income people bore 33 percent of the reductions in federal spending, even though those programs made up just 10 percent of the budget.

Merry Christmas, President Reagan. Merry Christmas, President Bush.

Quinn's controversial support for the ordination of women is matched by her demand for choice on abortion. "My belief is pro-woman, which means I'm pro-choice and, by extension, 'pro-life.' Life begins when a woman says so, when she allows a pregnancy to continue," says Quinn. "The church has been trying to control women's minds and bodies for years. If we are to walk upright in integrity, I believe *we* must have that control. Women can make good choices, have their own free will, and they must be respected."

Quinn founded CCW in the early '70s because there was no organization for women within the church. The group's national membership includes about 2,500 people: men and women, young and old, married and single, straight and lesbian.

Though Catholic dogma holds that mass must be celebrated by a priest, CCW encourages women to do so as well. "We celebrate the Eucharist," says Quinn. "The church hierarchy is afraid of women—they disregard us. One way we can work against this is to 'just do it.' We're taking control of our lives—no longer waiting, saying, 'Father, may I?'"

Ordination of women, according to Quinn, used to be "cutting edge." "Now, women are saying, 'The heck with them!' Nothing stands in the way historically, theologically or scripturally. Throughout his life, Jesus called forth women to minister and celebrate," says Quinn. "We have proof that there were ordained women in early centuries."

Readings at a CCW mass might include women's poetry, women's prose or scripture. Says Quinn, "God-imagery is feminist. Instead of father, father, father, let's use female terms—God as woman, mother, grandmother—for a couple of centuries and see how it sits. I think our daughters deserve it."

Ever since sixth grade, when she shocked a priest in her classroom by telling him she wanted to be one too, Quinn has put her actions where her heart is. Her work in the civil rights movement as a young nun in the early '60s gave her the impetus to become active in women's rights.

Quinn's outspoken views have gotten her into trouble with the church hierarchy. In 1989, Quinn participated in a National Organization for Women-sponsored public forum in Peoria, Ill., on abortion. The city's Roman Catholic bishop, John J. Myers, asked her not to come to the event.

Quinn appeared anyway. "If he could tell me that I couldn't travel to Peoria because it was his diocese, then any bishop anywhere could tell any woman that she could not enter a particular city because it was his diocese," Quinn argues. "In essence, he was denying freedom of travel, assembly and speech, rights I believe our country is founded upon."

In 1984, Quinn was one of the signers of a Catholics for Free Choice ad in the *New York Times* asking the church to open a dialogue on abortion. Although the nuns who signed the ad had a combined total of "500 years of service to the church," according to Quinn, the Vatican told them to "retract the statement or be dismissed" from their communities. "But our religious communities are our families," says Quinn. "Why should these strange men be allowed to tell us we should no longer belong to our families? Or do we as members say who can belong and who can't?"

Letters went back and forth between the heads of the orders and Rome. The signers held their position, and the Vatican eventually retracted its threat to have them dismissed. "The bad publicity scared Rome," Quinn says.

Guided by the Mother, Quinn continues on her controversial course. "Maybe God calls us to do these things," she says. "Maybe somehow God's looking after me and taking care of me."

—Cynthia Gelper

THE FIRST STONE

SOLIDARIDAD

By Joel Bleifuss

The passage of NAFTA marked a defeat for organized labor. But the congressional NAFTA vote was only one battle in what has now become an inter-American struggle to put the rights of people above the rights of property. The success or failure of this struggle depends on whether the U.S. union movement decides to act internationally or to retrench locally.

Judging from the American labor movement's past record, the future does not look bright. One of the rare times the AFL-CIO transcended its institutional parochialism was during the Cold War. The AFL-CIO, doing its patriotic best, cooperated with the Central Intelligence Agency to foster the growth of anti-communist, corporate-friendly unions in Latin America and Europe.

The AFL-CIO's international arm in Latin America is the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), an organization that has created and financed Latin American labor federations. These federations have worked in partnership with multinational corporations and have backed Latin American dictators friendly to the United States.

In Nicaragua, for example, AIFLD funded the Confederation of Trade Union Unity, a small right-wing labor federation that did nothing to oppose the Somoza dictatorship. After the 1979 revolution, however, the confederation helped the United States wage war against the Sandinistas.

In El Salvador, hundreds of anti-government labor leaders were murdered by right-wing death squads between 1980 and 1984. The subsequent decline of these unions was accompanied by the rise of AIFLD-sponsored unions affiliated with the ruling Christian Democratic Party.

In short, the AFL-CIO—through AIFLD—has helped purge reformers from the ranks of the Latin American labor movement and has created powerful company-friendly unions. As the free-trade fever spreads into Central America, as it doubtless will, the AFL-CIO will find that its AIFLD chickens have come home to roost, where they will

join their fine feathered friends, Mexico's official labor federations.

AIFLD has not been active in Mexico, if only because the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party firmly controls the country's union movement. And that's always been just fine with the AFL-CIO.

It's also worked out nicely for the Central Intelligence Agency. The largest of Mexico's official labor organizations is the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM). Both the AFL-CIO and the CTM are members of the Mexico City-based Inter-American Regional Labor Organization (ORIT). In *Inside the Company: A CIA Diary*, Philip Agee writes that ORIT's Mexico City headquarters was the center of the Central Intelligence Agency's labor operations in Latin America.

For the past 50 years, the CTM, in conjunction with successive Mexican administrations, has consistently crushed attempts by independent trade unionists to break from the official trade unions.

One of the most volatile labor battles in recent Mexican history was the attempt to form an independent union at the Ford Motor Co. plant in Cuautitlán on the outskirts of Mexico City. In *Mask of Democracy: Labor Suppression in Mexico Today*, Dan La Botz explains how since 1987 the CTM, the Mexican police and the Mexican court system have worked with Ford in an attempt to quash a movement among autoworkers for more democratic representation. On Jan. 8, 1990, 200 to 300 armed goons, hired days earlier by Ford and the CTM, went into the plant and tried to intimidate the 2,500 men working there. A fight developed, in which nine autoworkers were shot and at least 20 were hospitalized as the result of beatings. One worker, who had been shot in the back, later died.

As Raúl Escobar, an autoworker reformer who was active in the strike, told La Botz, "For a long time in Mexico the 'official' confederations, which are the right arm of the government, have been anti-democratic. Workers who lift up their heads to demand their rights are repressed, threatened or assassinated."

Throughout the strike at Ford, the the AFL-CIO treated the violence as an internal union matter and remained silent, as did the leadership of the United Auto Workers (UAW). The above-mentioned institutional affiliations between the AFL-CIO and the CTM partly account for the American labor movement's historic refusal to criticize its Mexican counterpart. Another factor may be that movements for union democracy touch a raw nerve here in the United States, where there is rarely anything democratic about the way top union leadership is selected.

The Mexican autoworkers did receive some support, particularly from those unionists affiliated with New Directions, the UAW reform movement. Minnesota labor activist

Tom Laney, chair of Local 879 Political Action Committee and regional organizer for New Directions, actively supports the Mexican autoworkers. "I think everyone who works for the same company should be on the same side. That is what unions are supposed to do," he says. "We weren't able to do as much as was needed because the UAW refused to provide support."

Laney believes that the UAW's refusal to help was tragic not only because the American union "has plenty of resources," but also because the moribund UAW could have "learned from the Mexicans how to organize autoworkers again."

The International Labor Rights Education Research Fund, an independent labor rights group based in Washington, recently petitioned the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative for a review of the labor-rights situation in Mexico. The group argued that Mexico was not fulfilling its legal obligation to grant internationally recognized workers' rights. It highlighted the January 1992 arrest of Agapito Gonzalez as an egregious example of repression. Gonzalez had been in Matamoros, organizing at U.S. plants called *maquiladoras*, located just inside the Mexican border.

In its response, the Trade Rep office conceded that Mexico's labor record was not perfect. But the office found there was no cause for such a review, because Mexico was "taking steps" to guarantee those rights. As for the case of the arrested *maquiladora* organizer, the office conceded that "it is possible, though it cannot be proved, that there might have been a link between Gonzalez, [his] trade union activities and his arrest ... [but] it is not clear whether this is a question of repression."

Sound familiar? That line of reasoning was used time and again in the '80s, as the State Department sought to assure Americans that while a few human rights violations may have occurred in El Salvador, the elected government was taking steps to ensure the survival of democracy.

The difference today is that this official doubletalk provides cover not for the oppression of insurgent peasants, but of North American workers. In his introduction to *Mask of Democracy*, Carter-era Labor Secretary Ray Marshall argues forcefully that all U.S. trade agreements should include "trade-linked labor standards." Writes Marshall: "We should not let multinational corporations or governments anywhere form alliances to exploit workers behind the screen of export-driven

development strategies."

Some unions in the United States and Mexico are meeting the NAFTA challenge by developing formal relationships with each other. The United Electrical Workers union (UE) has formed a "strategic organizing alliance" with Mexico's Authentic Labor Front (FAT), a democratic union federation founded in the early '60s. FAT, with UE support, is trying to organize five General Electric *maquiladoras* in Juarez. In the last several months, GE has fired more than 100 workers who were active in the organizing attempt.

The UE-FAT alliance is one of the organizing models being promoted by the North American Worker-to-Worker Network (NAWWN), an independent labor group based in North Carolina. Jacki VanAnda, the group's coordinator, says that NAWWN has established an "adopt an organizer" campaign, in which U.S. and Canadian community groups or local unions can offer financial and moral support to a labor organizer working in Mexico. In addition, adoption entails setting up an emergency response network for when the organizer is arrested. Explains VanAnda, "Unfortunately violence against people who are organizing happens too often in Mexico."

NAWWN can be reached at PO Box 1943, Rocky Mount, NC 27802. (919) 985-1957.

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



E C O N O M I C S

World Bunk

*Japanese
officials think
Western
austerity
measures are
the wrong
medicine for
Eastern
Europe.*

By John B. Judis
WASHINGTON D.C.

From the end of World War II through the '80s, Japan's diplomats dutifully maintained that their kind of capitalism and that of the Americans were alike. But in the last three years, Japanese officials have begun to assert in public what they previously would have only said in private: that Japan's capitalism is fundamentally different from—and in some ways superior to—American-style economics.

More is at stake than bragging rights. At the World Bank, where Japan is now the second-largest contributor, Japanese officials have begun to challenge the economic advice that American academics and bank officials are giving to Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America.

The Japanese are arguing that these developing countries should look to East Asia rather than to the United States and Great

Britain for their model of capitalist development. So far, World Bank officials have held off Japan's challenge. But as Eastern European economies crumble under the burden of American- and World Bank-sponsored "shock therapy," Japan's argument has become increasingly difficult to dismiss.

Japan's dissent was sparked by a recent change in the way the World Bank loans money. From its founding in 1945 until 1980, the bank primarily provided loans for dams, schools and other infrastructure projects in the Third World. But in 1980, it began to provide "structural adjustment" loans that were not tied to specific projects.

These loans, however, required the recipient country to meet certain conditions. These conditions—dictated by neo-classical economics—consisted of eliminating tariffs and restrictions on foreign investment, privatizing public banks and industries, eliminating subsidies for domestic industries, and removing any controls on credit and currency. Developing countries, in other words, were supposed

to adapt their economies to the theoretical ideals of the most conservative American economists.

Most World Bank aid to Eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union has taken this form; these countries—on the rebound from the failure of communist economics—willingly accepted the bank's conditions. Advised by Harvard's Jeffrey Sachs and by World Bank economists, they undertook programs of "shock therapy" designed to convert them overnight into burgeoning capitalist economies. But these policies have produced very high unemployment and declining output and are now leading to a widespread political revolt, one manifestation of which was the abortive October counterrevolution in Russia.

The Japanese had begun complaining about the bank's aid policies in the early '90s. They pointed out that Japan, Korea, Taiwan and other East Asian nations developed economically according to a far different model than that recommended by the bank and by Sachs. In East Asia, the Japanese noted, governments worked closely with business to develop strategies for economic growth. Nationalized banks selectively granted low-interest rate loans to targeted industries. Governments restricted foreign investment to maintain control over the direction of economic development. Subsidies were granted to business—but only in exchange for meeting specific performance requirements. And planners placed a high priority on becoming competitive through higher productivity rather than through lower wages.

Since 1960, the East Asian countries have prospered, while countries that followed an American model of development have floundered. Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Thailand

have grown three times as fast as Latin American and South Asian countries, and five times as fast as economies in Sub-Saharan Africa. Real income per capita increased more than four times in Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore and Taiwan.

Japan's displeasure with the bank first surfaced publicly at the organization's annual meeting in October 1991. In a speech, Bank of Japan Gov. Yasushi Mieno declared, "Experience in Asia has shown that although development strategies require a healthy respect for market mechanisms, the role of government cannot be forgotten." Mieno argued that government could "create the kind of environment in which free markets can function effectively."

That fall, at Japan's urging, the bank's economists completed an internal study of the East Asian model. The study urged the bank to consider the East Asian model as an alternative. Japan's executive director at the World Bank, Masaki Shiratori, vigorously campaigned for its publication, but the bank's other managing directors opposed making the study public. Finally, the bank's new president, Lewis Preston—formerly CEO of Morgan Guaranty Bank—agreed to publish the study's summary and to commission a public study that would incorporate the data of the internal study, but that would be under the control of the bank's managing directors. Japan's Finance Ministry agreed to fund it.

World Bank economists spent the next two years putting the internal documents into publishable form and writing an overall analysis and conclusion. The result, recently published as *The East Asian Miracle*, is a masterpiece in obfuscation. While the factual accounts of the different countries are useful and accurate, the bank's economists superimposed upon them conclusions that bear out the institution's own theoretical and ideological preconceptions. The conclusion consists of a plethora of debating devices used to evade the facts of East Asian success.

Early in the text, the authors try to undermine the very idea of an East Asian model. By comparing Hong Kong with South Korea, the bank officials come to the conclusion that "there is no single East Asian model." That's fine, except that no one would ever suggest Hong Kong—a long-time British colony and an outpost of London's financial district—as a model for Ukraine or Nigeria.

Then they concede that there might be an Asian

model, but that the success of the South Asian nations, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, is more relevant to other developing nations than the success of the more *dirigiste* Northeast Asian countries—an assertion for which they offer no argument. Finally, they concede that the Northeast Asian nations—Japan, South Korea and Taiwan—might provide a model, but they insist that these nations' success had nothing to do with "industrial policy" and government intervention.

"Industrial policy," the study concludes, "was generally not successful. In Japan, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and China, promotion of specific industries had little apparent impact."

The study asserts that the Asian countries succeeded because they paid attention to the "fundamentals" of fiscal and market discipline championed by the World Bank. "Attempts to guide resource allocations in international trade, financial markets and labor markets have reduced competitive discipline, guided resources into low productivity and internationally uncompetitive sectors and resulted in widespread rent-seeking."

In an appendix, the bank's officials attempt to ground these conclusions in arcane equations, but their findings have already been discredited by South Korean economist Jene Kwon. In a paper that will appear in the journal *World Development*, Kwon

shows that in South Korea, the industries that enjoyed the highest increase in output, productivity and sales were those subsidized and overseen by the government. The same kind of results could be demonstrated for Japan and Taiwan.

Japanese officials, who kept their distance from the project, have already expressed their disappointment with the study's results. At an October breakfast meeting at the Economic Strategy Institute, Finance Ministry official Eisuke Sakakibara reaffirmed Japan's conviction that America's and the bank's shock therapy strategy was ill-suited for developing nations. Sakakibara, the author of an impressive new study, *Beyond Capitalism: The Japanese Model of Market Economics*, also attributed part of the upheaval in Russia to the Yeltsin regime's acceptance of the dictums of Sachs and the bank.

Sakakibara and the Japanese are continuing their challenge to the World Bank and its economic orthodoxy. That's a good thing, because the Japanese are basically right about the bank's lending policies—and about the poverty of the American neo-classical model in Eastern Europe. ◀



P O L A N D

Forging a bleak future

Things go from bad to worse at a Polish steel factory.

By John Radzilowski

The road to the Nowa Huta steel plant passes through one of the most desolate human landscapes created without the use of nuclear bombs. Blocks of identical high-rise apartment buildings, executed in dirty gray concrete, testify to the failure of one system and the obstacles facing its successor. The sky is hazy from pollution even on sunny days, and weeds run rampant in empty fields and along roadways.

Nowa Huta, or "New Forge," is Poland's largest steel plant and one of the world's largest industrial complexes. It is a city unto itself, covering 18 square kilometers, including living quarters, clinics and a cafeteria that serves 15,000 meals a day to a workforce of 19,000. It became famous as a center of Solidarity activism and infamous as one of Europe's dirtiest, most polluting

plants. Today, 40 years after steel was first forged at Nowa Huta, the plant is emblematic of the changes Poland has made, and has yet to make—of difficult lives that belie the glitter of new shops crammed with imported electronics and the billboards shilling for the good life as it is lived in Germany and the United States.

A walk through Nowa Huta is like a step back into the world of 19th-century industry. The factories are massive buildings of crumbling red brick and cracked, dirty glass. The interiors are dark, lit only by a few scattered lights, by the dim sunlight seeping through soot-covered windows, by the flames and molten metal of the founding process. The noise of the machinery never ceases.

The plant and the town of Nowa Huta were built in the early '50s, part of a plan hatched by Poland's Stalinist leaders to create not only new industry but a New Socialist Man to replace the men and women of old Poland. To do this, they bulldozed some old peasant villages in the hills east of Krakow, Poland's most historic city, and in their stead

built a town without churches and a Soviet-style steel plant.

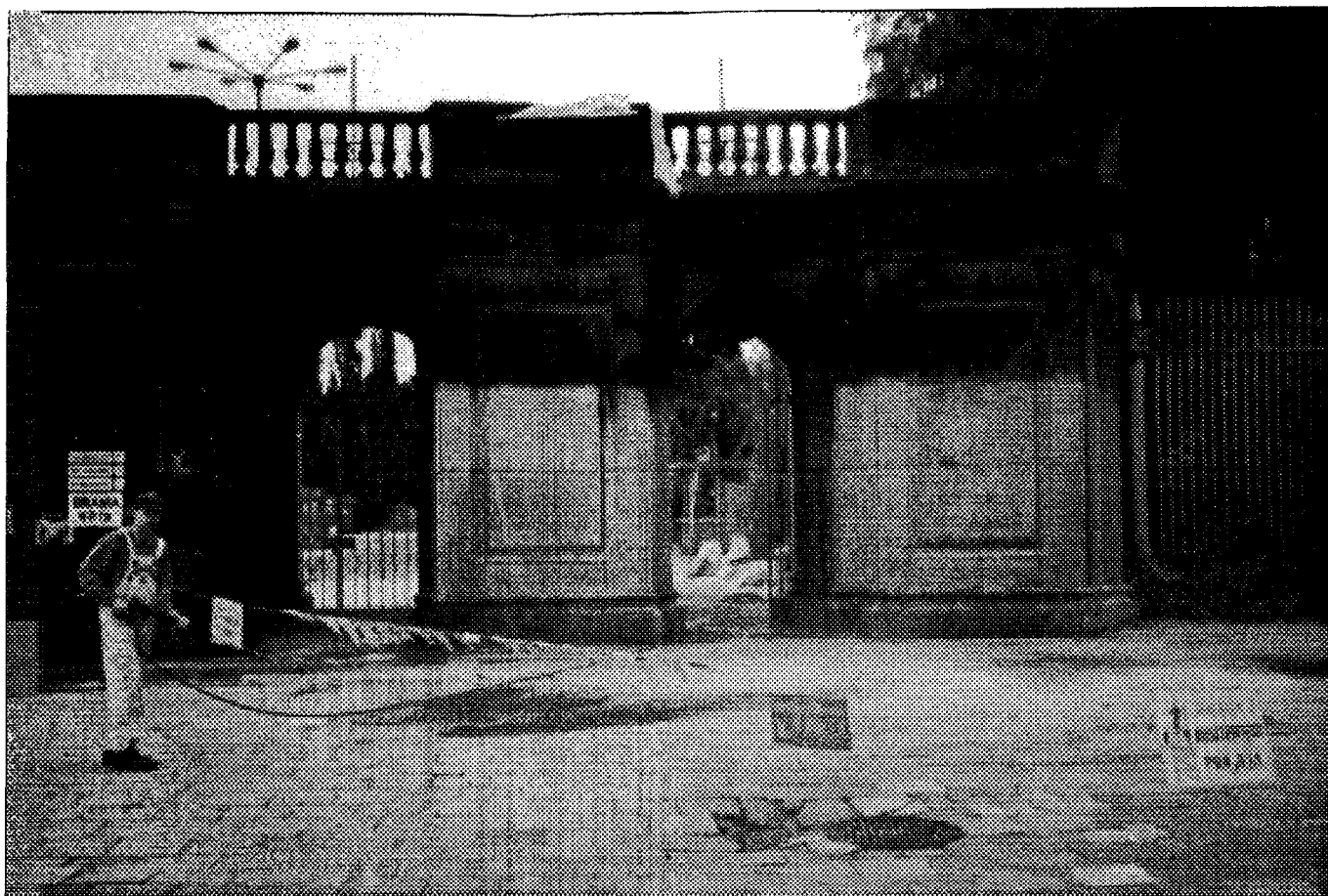
The result was not, of course, a New Man, but rather a lot of smog. At its height, the plant pumped out tons of dust a day, most of which settled back onto Krakow in the form of grit so heavy it turned sheets on clotheslines from white to gray. The buildings and statues that had miraculously survived the systematic destruction planned for them by retreating Nazis in 1944 were blackened by soot and slowly devoured by a new enemy—acid rain.

Today, the plant puts out less than half the dust it did in 1989, but this is more the result of a drop in production than of any new environmental consciousness. Rust-red clouds, rich with iron ore, still rise from the blast furnace. In a regular cycle, the plant's white-stone gates, cleaned every month with high-pressure hoses, turn black from the pollution.

The people of Nowa Huta, like the people of many other industrial towns in Poland, have emerged from their communist past into a world that is more uncertain than ever. The giant industrial concerns, such as Nowa Huta, the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk, the Silesian coal mines and the Ursus tractor works near Warsaw, were Solidarity strongholds. Now the workers in these establishments are losing out as a result of the changes they helped bring about.

Half the steel mill's machinery is vintage Soviet equipment, much of it designed in the '20s and '30s. The cost of replacing it would be prohibitive. The rest of the plant's equipment comes from a variety of Western countries and was bought during the '70s when Poland's rulers borrowed heavily and unwisely from Western banks to finance such purchases. Just as pressure to close such large, inefficient

PHOTO BY JOHN RADZILOWSKI



and dirty plants grows—pressure that comes from Poland's Western creditors as well as from sectors within Polish society—the pressure from Polish workers to keep them open increases.

Nowa Huta is still a Solidarity stronghold, but it is a very different Solidarity from the one that struck the first telling blow against the communist system in 1980. The Solidarity of 1993 is divided and embittered, with seemingly little agenda other than opposing the government's reform plan and preserving the jobs of its members. Its political representatives helped bring about the dissolution of parliament in May, but most observers considered it a pyrrhic victory.

Solidarity members have much to be bitter about. At Nowa Huta, the workforce is less than half of what it was in 1979, with most of the losses coming in the past few years. Few younger workers are in evidence. The after-tax salary for a steelworker averages 3.3 million zlotys a month (about \$183 U.S.). With monthly rents running at 1.5 to 2 million zlotys a month, a 13-fold increase in food prices over the past four years and a steady rate of inflation, the steelworkers have cause to worry, even though their salaries are still higher than those of many state employees. Poland's unemployment rate stands at 16 percent and is concentrated in depressed industrial areas such as Silesia or Lodz, Poland's textile center. Although the private sector is creating many new jobs, the jury is still out on what sorts of jobs

are being created, what skills they will require and how much they will pay.

Many Poles felt that the previous government's economic policies had been too mechanistic. But there are few alternatives attractive either to the majority of Poles or to Poland's Western creditors.

Despite the outcome of the September elections—which threw out the proponents of economic “shock therapy” in favor of a broader “Democratic Left”—the workers of Nowa Huta face enormous challenges, with few hopeful options in sight. Like their counterparts in Gary, Ind., or Bethlehem, Pa., a decade ago, they face a future in which the skills they have relied on their entire lives will be judged superfluous. But unlike the workers in Gary and Bethlehem, Poland's steelworkers live in an impoverished country, where horses are still a major component of agriculture.

The acid rain continues to eat away at Krakow's ancient monuments and erodes the nearby forests, just as the plant, a continuing gift from Stalin to the people of Poland, erodes the lives of its workers.

John Radzilewski is a graduate student in history and a freelance writer. He lives in Tempe, Ariz.

This worker has just finished cleaning the lower half of a gate at Nowa Huta. The pollution-blackened gates are cleaned every month.

P O L I T I C S

False idol

Today you are perhaps more popular than at any time since you ascended the pontifical throne 15 years ago. But criticisms of you are still to be heard, even in "your" Poland. Why exactly in Poland?

Pope John Paul II decries Eastern Europe's embrace of "savage capitalism."

An interview by Jas Gawronski

The problem is to understand what the underlying reason is for the critical orientation. And, according to me, at the root of this problem lies an erroneous conception of what it means to enter into Europe.

Naturally, I am not opposed to Poland's so-called entry into Europe, but I am against the attempt to turn this endeavor into a kind of idol, a false idol. According

to the proponents of this undertaking, Poland's entry into Europe would mean the introduction into Poland of ... [a] consumeristic system devoid of values, introducing it through the force of propaganda. It all goes back to this.

In point of fact, Poland does not need to enter Europe, because it is already in Europe, right in its center. It is important that it be a part of Europe with the values that are its own, and not by adopting in an uncritical and blind fashion the customs of the West, not by assimilating the worst in them.

Why has communism had the success it has had in history, and how do you explain the fact that it is still a force to be reckoned with in certain Western countries, while in others, such as Lithuania and Poland, it has returned to power through elections?

Communism has had its success in this century as a reaction against a certain type of unbridled, savage capitalism, which we all know well. One need only take in hand the social encyclicals, and in particular the first, the *Rerum Novarum*, in which Leo XIII describes the condition of the workers of that time. Marx, too, described it in his own way. That's what social reality was like, without a doubt, and it was a consequence of the system, of the principles of ultra-liberal capitalism. ...

And so a reaction to that reality was brought forth, a reaction that grew and gained the support of many people—not only within the working class, but also among the intellectuals. Many of them thought that communism would be able to improve the quality of life. In this way, many intellectuals, in Poland as well, gave themselves over to collaboration with the communist authorities. Then, at a certain point they realized that reality was different from how they imagined it. Some of them, the bravest and most truthful, began to distance themselves from the power establishment and went over to the opposition.

And this return to power of communists in certain ex-communist countries, how can it be explained?

This is not so much a matter of a return of communism, as it is a reaction to the ineffectiveness of the new governments—something that, moreover, comes as no surprise. The only political class that existed for 50 years was the communist one. They are primarily the ones who learned how politics works, how the parliament operates, etc. And the others, those who are now defined as the "center" or as

Pope John Paul II recently gave only the second interview of his papacy. Speaking to Jas Gawronski of the Italian newspaper *La Stampa*, he criticized the "savage capitalism" that now dominates Eastern Europe and praised the "kernel of truth" contained in socialism.

The pope's views reflect a century of Catholic social thought. Pope Leo XIII's first encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, issued in 1891, called on Catholics to understand the "seeds of truth" in the socialist appeal to workers, labor unions and the poor. But Pope John Paul's criticism of Eastern European capitalism also reflects growing and profound disillusionment in Europe with the capitalist "shock therapy" promoted by American academics and the World Bank.

The following was excerpted with permission from a translation by the British Guardian.



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the "right," were not prepared to govern, because they had not had any previous opportunity to do so. They were strong and united in opposition, as in Poland at the time of Solidarity, but now are divided. In part it is Poland's vice, a kind of atavistic vice: an exaggerated individualism which leads to the fragmentation and division of the socio-political scene. Its forte lies in opposition, and not in the constructive proposals that lead to successful government.

You fought hard and passionately against communism. But now in the countries that have freed themselves from it, moral degradation abounds, drug use and prostitution are widespread. In the ex-Yugoslavia there is a war that makes mockery of the concept of civilization. Do you ever ask yourself if it was really worthwhile to defeat communism?

I think it is mistaken to pose the question in these terms. Of course, it was legitimate to fight against the unjust, totalitarian system that defined itself as socialist or communist.

But it is also true what Leo XIII says, that there are some "seeds of truth" even in the socialist program. It is obvious that these seeds should not be destroyed. ... The proponents of capitalism in its extreme forms tend to overlook the good things achieved by communism: the efforts to overcome

unemployment, the concern for the poor. ...

In socialism as actually practiced, the state's excessive protectiveness produced, however, some negative results as well. Private initiative disappeared, inertia and passivity became widespread. Now, with a changed system, people find themselves without any experience, without the capacity to do for themselves, and unaccustomed to personal responsibility. ...

As you can see, the transition from one system to the other is very difficult. Its costs are also very high: a rise in unemployment, poverty and human misery.

When you said, during your recent visit to the Baltic countries, that there was a "kernel of truth" in Marxism or socialism, your remarks caught many by surprise.

But there is nothing new in this. It has always been an element of the Church's social doctrine. Leo XIII also said the same thing, and we can only reconfirm that.

When I hear you speak like this, I begin to wonder if you are not more strongly opposed to capitalism than to communism. Is this the impression you wish to give?

We should go back to the cause of the phenomena which we are witnessing. And, according to me, at the root of many of the serious social and human problems besetting Europe and the world today are the distorted manifestations of capitalism.

Of course, the capitalism of today is no longer the same as the capitalism of Leo XIII's times. It has changed, and in good measure due to the influence of socialist thought.

Today's capitalism is different. It has introduced social safety nets, thanks to the union movements; it has enacted social policies and is monitored by the state and the unions. In some countries of the world, however, it has remained in its "savage" state, almost as it was in the past century.

To the Poles you once said: "Look for a path not yet explored." Was that an appeal to search for a third path between capitalism and socialism?

I fear that the idea of a third path is another utopia. On the one hand, we have communism, a utopia that, once put into practice, revealed itself to be tragically flawed. On the other hand, we have capitalism, which in its practical side and at the level of its basic principles would be acceptable in terms of the social doctrine of the Church. ... Unfortunately, there are abuses of this acceptable practice—various forms of injustice, exploitation, violence and arrogance—and some come to see these practices as acceptable in and of themselves. And that's when we arrive at forms of a savage capitalism. It is the abusive practices of capitalism that are to be condemned.

TRADE

The morning NAFTA

T

he NAFTA debate is behind us. But as a result of the bruising battle over NAFTA's passage, questions about how American workers fit into the new global economy are much more prominently and securely part of the nation's political landscape.

*The anti-
NAFTA
coalition lost
in Congress.
But its
opposition may
herald the
dawn of a new
populist inter-
nationalism.*

By David Moberg

In the short run, these questions are being underscored in the debate over revisions to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). And in the long term, the NAFTA conflict has revealed both a deep crisis of American national identity and a newly emerging internationalism.

The low road to President Clinton's victory on NAFTA was paved with political payoffs. But his high-road message appealed to nationalistic pride: aren't we Americans confident of our ability to compete in the world, especially against a poor little country like Mexico?

The popular anxiety about NAFTA, however,

was not about whether "we" can't compete, but about who "we" are. Increasingly, the average American thinks that when corporate leaders use "we," they are speaking only of themselves. Worries about NAFTA reflect a distrust, most pronounced among working people, that corporations will willingly jettison or threaten U.S. employees if they have an overseas opportunity to pay lower wages, avoid environmental and safety regulations, or escape public responsibilities.

This broadly based conviction is not just an expression of "insecurity" that can be pacified with promises of health security and job retraining, as the Clinton administration suggested. It reflects a deep, new fissure in the American sense of identity as a nation—as well as a growing sense of powerlessness over the economic forces that shape many people's lives.

Anger over NAFTA demonstrates the unraveling of a loosely formulated, psycho-social contract that most Americans have carried around in their heads for the past half-century. Those who, in President Clinton's oft-repeated phrase, "work hard and play by the rules" have believed that being part of the national economy offered them a solid hope of financial opportunity and individual material progress.

Americans don't doubt their own abilities or willingness to work. They do worry increasingly that they have no control over whether they—or their children—will have a chance to use their abilities in a way that will provide a "middle class," that is, moderately comfortable, standard of living.

At the same time, the campaign against NAFTA opened up a new internationalism. It's striking how many Americans have come to realize that protection of their jobs and standard of living depends on expanding the political, labor and human rights of people in countries like Mexico—and in raising wages throughout the world. With some exceptions—especially in the Perot and Buchanan anti-NAFTA camps—critics of American NAFTA expressed genuine concern about poverty, exploitation, and health and environmental problems in Mexico.

Direct contact between U.S. labor groups and Mexican workers is one factor in this newfound solidarity. Moreover, the end of the Cold War has made it easier for American workers finally to identify with the aspirations of workers in poor countries. In the past, they had been blinded by an anti-communist obsession that led U.S. unions to help undermine democracy and effective labor and peasant organizations in less-developed countries. (See "The First Stone," page 12.) Now many U.S. unionists have come to see a mutual, shared interest in improving the lot of workers everywhere.

In the fight against NAFTA, American workers—as well as environmentalists and other critics—saw their problems

as a result of corporate decisions by nominally American companies. Before NAFTA, workers were more concerned with unfair trading practices of Japanese, Korean or other foreign-based corporations. And since U.S. multinationals account for more than 40 percent of imports of merchandise into the United States (and trade between parent companies and offshore subsidiaries makes up half of that), it is significant that the trade debate is increasingly focused on corporate power and not just on relations among nations.

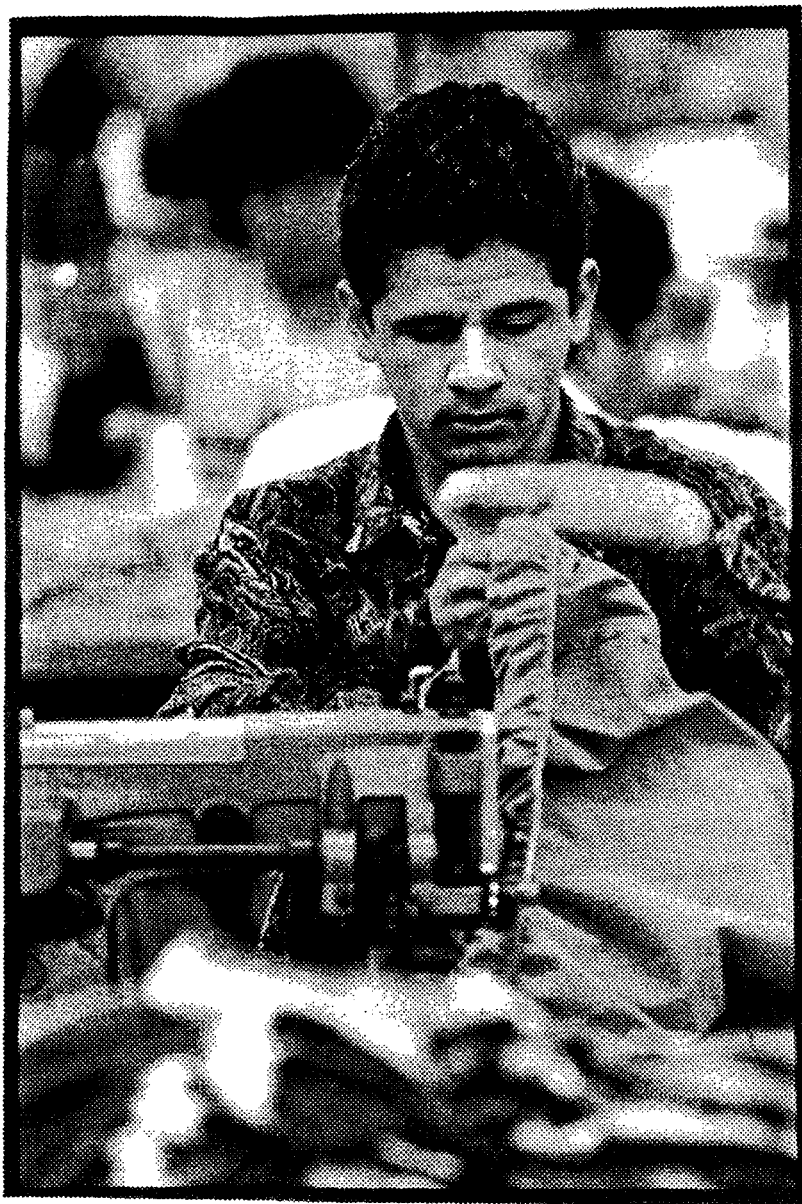
The power of global corporations is central to the GATT negotiations, which are being rushed to meet a December 15 deadline for completion. (After that date, Clinton would have to ask Congress to extend once again his "fast track" negotiating authority.) This "Uruguay Round" of talks started seven years ago. It has focused on expanding GATT, originally signed in 1948, to cover agriculture and services, and on eliminating many "non-tariff" barriers to trade.

But Ralph Nader calls the current, unfinished Uruguay Round text a "multinational Magna Carta." The new GATT rules "would establish a world economic government dominated by giant corporations," Nader writes in a new collection of essays, *The Case Against Free Trade*. "It is bad enough to have the U.S. Fortune 200 along with European and Japanese corporations effectively ruling the Seven Seas of the marketplace. ... But it is a level of magnitude worse for this rule to be formally expanded over entire political economies without any democratic accountability to the people," he argues.

Nader and many other GATT critics argue that the proposed Uruguay Round rules and the establishment of a new United Nations-like institution, the Multilateral Trading Organization (MTO), would threaten popular democratic government. They would permit governments to challenge and overturn other nations' domestic protections of the environment, food safety and social welfare, on the grounds that such restrictions constitute barriers to trade.

In one famous case, GATT administrators have already ruled that the United States can't restrict imports of tuna caught with methods that needlessly kill dolphins. But the range of potential GATT interference in domestic regulations is enormous. For example, the European Community is now challenging U.S. fuel-efficiency standards and the auto luxury tax as unfair trade practices. The United States earlier challenged European regulations on hormones in beef and Thai restrictions on cigarettes.

The opportunities for such challenges will greatly expand



with the proposed GATT. For example, it's likely that regulations regarding governmental procurements—ranging from minority business set-asides to recycling requirements—would violate the new GATT. Furthermore, all trade disputes would be channeled into the new MTO, which would have greatly expanded powers. As things stand now, there must be consensus among all the parties to *go forward* with a GATT dispute panel finding; in the future, there would have to be consensus to *overturn* such a finding.

Also, the new GATT attempts to "harmonize" environmental and health regulations downward rather than raise them. If any country (or state or local government) wants to impose health or environmental standards above an interna-

The NAFTA debate made U.S. workers sensitive to the wages and conditions of their Mexican counterparts.

tional minimum, it would have to meet stringent requirements. These requirements include making sure that the regulation is the least restrictive to trade possible.

The new GATT would provide more protection for intellectual property, restrict the ability of countries to regulate foreign investment, and open up markets for trade in services, such as banking. However, unlike NAFTA, the proposed GATT does not include even the smallest gesture of protection of the environment or labor and human rights—even though U.S. legislation authorizing trade negotiations has called for international protection of worker rights since 1974.

"GATT is really backward-looking in a Reagan way," argues Mark Ritchie, president of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and a leading GATT critic. "There are no fig leaves in GATT. It's as crude in overturning domestic law with international shenanigans as you'll get."

The overall thrust of the new GATT is "trade *über alles*," says Lori Wallach, director of the trade program for Public Citizen, the Nader-founded lobbying group. Even if there are advantages in expanded world trade, "Why should trade trump everything?" she asks.

The new GATT also embodies rules that fundamentally work "to restrain government involvement in the economy," according to Mark Anderson, a trade economist with the AFL-CIO. As International Metalworkers Federation general secretary Marcello Malentacchi says, the current round of GATT talks "represents the end-game of the neoliberal world economic project dating from the '80s," that is, the Reaganite-Thatcherite strategy of deregulation and minimization of government.

In many cases, the new GATT provides what the free-market right wing could not politically win on its own. For example, GATT would eliminate already inadequate programs that partially protect family farmers in many countries.

In stripping individual governments of much of their power to intervene in the economy, GATT upsets some corporations as well as labor. GATT would eliminate the international Multi-Fiber Arrangement that regulates apparel and textile imports, and would thus wipe out much of the U.S. industry, eliminating an estimated 1.25 million jobs. And GATT would undermine the semiconductor agreement that opened the Japanese market to American companies. Industry and labor critics also assail the new GATT language for undercutting U.S. unilateral trade sanctions and greatly restricting the government's ability to stop dumping of products in the U.S. market at unfair prices.

In a cruel twist of history, the new GATT rules restricting government subsidies—championed by the Bush administration and cheered as a blow against the European Airbus consortium—appear to threaten U.S. federal assistance in aerospace, medical technology, pharmaceuticals and possibly even Clinton's new auto industry research program. Originally aimed at industrial policies of other countries, GATT could backfire.

The movement that fought NAFTA will, with some

exceptions, continue to do battle over GATT. The administration and other likely proponents of the proposed GATT will mindlessly sell it as free trade and thus an unqualified good. Critics, on the other hand, will insist that it is not free trade but rather a new set of rules, rules that favor multinational corporations at the expense of workers and democratic governments everywhere. "In NAFTA the jobs issue was prominent and became the issue," Wallach says. "With GATT the issue is where are decisions made, who's in control?"

Two different political thrusts emerged from the anti-NAFTA campaign and will remain important far beyond the fight over GATT. First, there is a growing awareness that there must be stronger international protections for worker and human or democratic rights and for the environment. Eventually the new fair-trade coalition must push for complementary policies that raise wages and spur development in less-developed countries. That will entail opposing World Bank-type policies that emphasize austerity, exports, low wages and minimal government involvement. (See story on page 14.)

Second, there's a renewed consciousness of the need to strengthen the power of governments at all levels—as well as the power of workers—to control the fate of their economies and the corporations on which they depend. National governments must be free to pursue distinctive strategies that reflect democratic decisions of their citizens. Sovereign states must not be subject to the rule of multinational corporations under the guise of free trade.

For Americans, this strategy involves a resurgent, democratic nationalism, the creation of a meaningful definition of "we Americans." But it must be a nationalism that serves the interest of democracy, human rights and economic development for the rest of the world. In this way, such a new nationalism can embody the best of this country's values but also the self-interest of the average American. ◀

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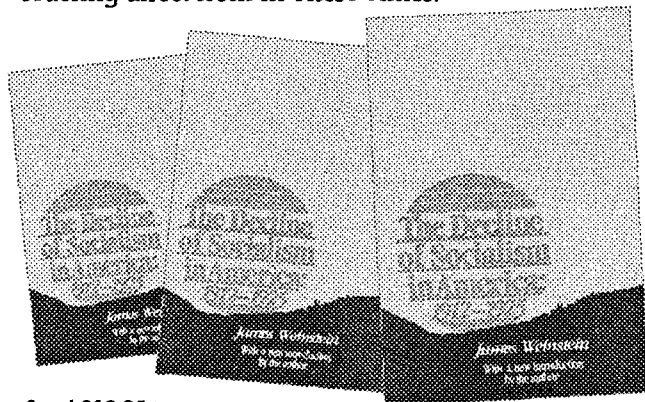
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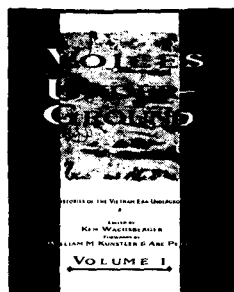
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EDUCATION

Schools for hire

By Alex Molnar

If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war," proclaimed the report *A Nation at Risk* in 1983.

Although it was produced by America's education establishment, *A Nation at Risk* was quickly embraced by business leaders and helped focus a decade of corporate attempts to help reform America's public schools. Since *A Nation at Risk* cast America's economic crisis as a failure of public education, the enthusiastic response of business leaders was not surprising. Its self-assured, bombastic tone helped deflect public attention away from structural problems in the economy, corporate strategy and government economic policy.

The report also helped create a political climate in which business leaders quickly assumed pre-eminent status in the school reform debate. Corporate America used *A Nation at*

Risk to justify and mold the reform of public education. Schools had to do better, executives argued, or the American economy would continue to crumble. In the name of promoting global competitiveness, business leaders supported raising teachers' salaries, increasing professional accountability, instituting more stringent high school graduation requirements and reforming school curriculum.

Business leaders pushed higher standards for teachers and students, as well as curriculum more relevant to the world of work and more accountability for everyone associated with public education. Otherwise, they argued, the next generation of highly skilled workers necessary to keep the global economy humming would not be American. Corporate enthusiasm for educational reform was so great that by 1987 the Department of Education estimated that 40 percent of America's companies had entered into "partnerships" with public elementary and secondary schools.

In the popular press as well as in business and education journals, corporate educational reform efforts were covered extensively. With few exceptions, reports of business involvement in education were celebratory and uncritical. It was confidently assumed that the revolution in corporate management and structure that was changing the face of industrial America would work wonders for the public schools as well. No one seemed to notice that the wave of corporate restructuring was destroying, not creating, jobs for highly skilled workers. Yet, predictably, 10 years after the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, despite countless high-profile business initiatives, the decay of America's urban schools has not slowed, nor has the overall quality of American public education markedly improved.

Corporate America's actions over the last 10 years have had a schizophrenic quality. Executives tended to support reforms embraced by the education establishment, but their tax and public policy positions helped assure that public schools, especially big-city schools, could not achieve the goals set out for them.

Now, many business leaders have switched positions and begun to support "market based" school reforms. Private school voucher schemes and "charter school" proposals, as well as plans for privately owned, for-profit schools are evoking considerable interest among corporate movers and shakers. Evidence from both the United States and Great Britain strongly suggests that the "market" will not provide solutions to America's educational problems. But market-based reforms are consistent with corporate America's general public policy preferences. And they have the advantage of providing seemingly public-spirited justification for introducing the world of education to the "profit motive."

Although market-based approaches are attracting considerable business

support, despite open hostility toward higher taxes to help finance them, corporate faith in the value of government-established curriculum standards, vocational training programs and accountability remains strong. Not surprisingly, President Clinton's proposals for national education goals, youth apprenticeship programs and school-business partnerships have solid backing from executives of large corporations as well as the education establishment.

The major education reforms promoted by corporations in the '80s could plausibly have claimed a high public purpose. However, the wave of corporate criticism of public education during the '80s, a flood of business-backed reform proposals and a relentlessly pro-business environment succeeded in opening wide the school-house door for self-serving programs. Although often cloaked in the rhetoric of school improvement and school-business cooperation, these efforts are not aimed at educating the skilled workers corporations say they need to compete in a global market. Instead, they are efforts to turn the public schools themselves into direct sources of corporate profit.

There's nothing new about business' efforts to sell products and establish name recognition as well as propagandize for their points of view in public schools. This has been common for most of the century. However, in the '80s a Rubicon of sorts was crossed. Not only did the volume of advertising reach new levels of intrusiveness, but marketing efforts were also often unashamedly characterized as legitimate contributions to curriculum content. The '80s was not a time to say no to business, and educators were desperate to prove their willingness to "cooperate." It is hardly surprising that as the decade wore on it became increasingly common and acceptable for public schools to be treated as cash cows to pump up a company's bottom line. If commercialism was a stowaway when the corporate reform ship set sail in 1980, it is now at the helm.

This tendency led the Whittle Com-

munications Corp. in 1992 to hire Yale University President Benno Schmidt to head up its "Edison Project," a plan to create a nationwide chain of for-profit schools. Somewhat more modestly, Educational Alternatives, Inc. offered to contract with school districts to manage their schools for the same amount of money the district spent per pupil. The company claims it can do so with such efficiency that investors could actually see a profit.

The "high tech" innovations now being proposed by a growing number of corporations are a more subtle, less examined and potentially more powerful factor driving the trend toward commercialized public education. Whittle Communications' Channel One demonstrated how a relatively simple technology such as satellite broadcasting can be used to establish a connection between instructional innovation and corporate profit. Channel One uses cash-strapped schools to deliver students to advertisers. Although there is no advertising in text books (yet), commercials have already been built into "educational" software. Whittle Communications' Edison Project is an explicit attempt to introduce high-tech systems in schools as a mechanism for earning direct profits for investors.

The Edison Project may not succeed. However, it will not be the last attempt to make school reform part of a process to generate private profit. Recently, telephone companies have begun promoting plans for high-tech "schools of tomorrow" that would make use of a variety of electronic messaging, telephonic and information processing services they are anxious to sell.

Corporate high-tech initiatives raise serious questions about the meaning of public education and, by extension, the nature of our civic culture. If information technology is indeed to be the key that unlocks the "world of tomorrow," it is worth considering whether a child's access to that information—and the skills necessary to use it—should be governed by a school district's ability to meet the commercial demands of a private corporation. If

the information necessary for full citizenship is sold only to those who can afford it, then the introduction of information technology will herald dramatic increases in public school inequalities.

Unless there is a change in policy, the end of the century will see a firm link between the provision of public education and the ability of schools to deliver corporate profits. Since public schools occupy a central place in our communal life and are our most potent expression of an ecumenical democratic vision, their transformation into profit-making institutions has serious implications for the character of our democracy.

Fortunately, opposition to commercialism in public education has been mounting steadily since the mid-'80s. A diverse group of parents, teachers, students and public-interest advocacy groups has been waging a vigorous campaign in opposition to Whittle Communications' Channel One program. The extent to which the positions of this emerging coalition will evolve into a general rejection of commercialism in public education and succeed in capturing the public-policy initiative remains to be seen. However, the chance for any change in policy is remote without much greater public awareness of what is at stake for our schools, our civic culture, our economy and our children if the profit motive is allowed to dominate public education. ◀

Alex Molnar is currently working on a book, *Giving Kids the Business*, about the commercialization of school reform, to be published by Westview Press.

This article is part of a continuing series on education edited by Alex Molnar, a professor of education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The series, "Notes From the Back of the Class," covers a wide range of education-related issues. Contributions from readers are welcome. Manuscripts of no more than 1,000 words should be sent to Alex Molnar c/o In These Times, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.

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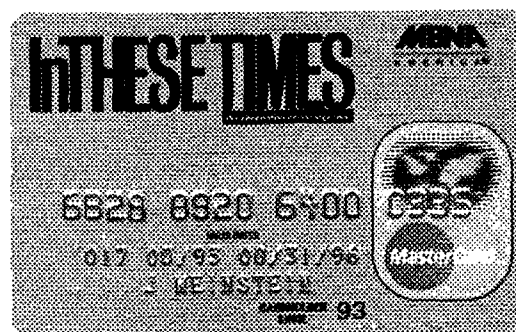
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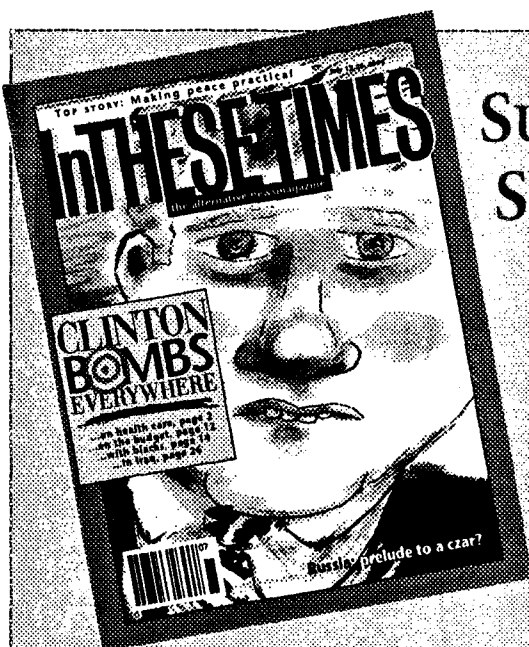
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I N T H E A R T S

Hollywood does the Holocaust

W

hen the Jews are rounded up in Krakow early in *Schindler's List*, a well-to-do family is summarily turned out of its fine apartment for Oskar Schindler, war profiteer and drinking buddy of the occupying army. He takes a tour of his new home and announces with pleasure, "It could not be better." The Jewish family, meanwhile, is shoved into a cramped, peeling room in a tenement. The husband gasps in disgust; the wife shrugs and sighs, "It could be worse."

In a way, both those comments also apply to Steven Spielberg's considerable achievement in filming the Thomas Keneally novel about one of the most enigmatic of the Gentile "rescuers" during World War II. Hollywood is probably incapable of producing a more unflinching look at the grubby everyday horror of the Final Solution.

Despite its faults, Steven Spielberg's Schindler's List is a surprisingly unflinching look at the Final Solution.

By Pat Dowell

Spielberg resisted the urge to Disneyfy *Schindler's List* in the manner of *The Color Purple*. For rising to the occasion, the director deserves much credit, and he'll get it. This Oskar will no doubt finally earn him the Oscar he craves; if not, nothing will ever get it for him. *Schindler's List* punches all the right Academy Award buttons—and is genuinely thoughtful and moving besides. And what other mainstream director has the industry clout to make a film like this? Not only was the film shot in Poland, in black-and-white, without major stars, but it also lasts three hours and features the entire gallery of Holocaust nightmares.

Spielberg, however, adds a little drop of honey to leaven the misery. The film's central character, Oskar Schindler (Liam Neeson), is a not-very-winsome Nazi businessman who gradually comes to see the light. Or rather the dark. The horrors of the Holocaust are finally too much even for a heartless philanderer who seeks to make his fortune on slave labor.

So Schindler spends his profits buying more than 1,200 souls—the names on his list—from a young concentration camp despot, Amon Goeth, a splendidly soulful pig who sometimes shoots internees for sport from the balcony of his villa.

Goeth, played by brave Brit actor Ralph Fiennes, is no mere cardboard Nazi monster but a fully fledged character. *Schindler's List* is stuffed with them, from Schindler himself down to the lowliest victim whose blood seeps photogenically into the Polish snow. It's an old-fashioned movie in that sense, peopled with adroit character actors directed by a master of the old-Hollywood style of cinematic construction.

That's what Spielberg is, what exalts him and confines him. Even the black-and-white cinematography, with its occasional touch of color, has a crazed nostalgia about it; it also serves to mute the hideously realistic violence. Every scene builds to an emotional payoff. When Schindler ingeniously bends Goeth's ear with a drunken rumination about how mercy demonstrates real power, we know the commandant will try the notion on like a new uniform.

The next morning Goeth forgives the stable boy who handles his prize saddle roughly. He restrains himself from hitting another of his slaves and offers a benediction to his mirror, like some preternatural pope. But we know that his experiment will last only so long, since he's an impatient man, and when the cleaning boy can't get those rings out of the bathtub ... well, it won't be long before rifle shots ring out again.

In another scene in the camp, the Nazis' pistols misfire over and over as the guards try to execute a worker who hasn't manufactured enough hinges. In the background,

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Schindler's List
Directed by
Steven Spielberg

workers who happen to pass by this spectacle start running off, one by one, to get out of the scene before they are sucked into it.

Such audacious little set pieces have a bleak gallows humor reminiscent of the darkest, wryest thoughts of, say, an Isaac Bashevis Singer on the depths of human cruelty. They also have "punchlines"—either ironic revelations (the unshootable metalworker is a rabbi, it turns out) or emotional haymakers, like the grisly fate of a little girl whose pink coat leaps out from the monochrome screen.

There are few "extraneous" images—few of the dramatically irrelevant visual details that give many European films the shape of poetry and a sense of life as it is lived. *Schindler's List* is a movie that travels in a line as straight as the track into Auschwitz. That's what gives its three hours a nerve-wracking sense of urgency. And yet it's also what never quite lifts the film out of the theater until the black-and-white narrative is finally derailed in a splash of color and plotlessness at the end. The final scene shows a tribute of small stones and roses laid lovingly on the real Schindler's grave in Israel by those he saved and by their children. They are accompanied by the actors who played them.

It must be said that there is something unbalanced about being able to view the destruction of the European Jews

only through the prism of the one-in-a-million Christian who risked something to help. Schindler is not too far from all those struggling white males in Hollywood movies such as *Regarding Henry*, *The Doctor* and *Dances with Wolves* who undergo ordeals of their own in other people's holocausts, emerging as Better Men for the experience.

And somehow the movie never comes consciously to grip with another irony that is as large and mysterious as the conversion to humanity of Schindler himself. The money he uses to buy the Jews' lives is, when you think about it, not his at all, but theirs.

It comes from their sweat, their blood, their tears—just as in any capitalist enterprise today. Schindler's "philanthropy," heroic as it is under these horrific circumstances, is to return what he and his have taken from the Jewish workers. In fact, the movie's most piercing and then most maddening moment comes at the war's end when Schindler sees the things he has kept as lives he might have saved. "My car," he wails, "10 people right there!" (Today, a Rolls—a dozen homeless off the streets?)

The Jews gather round to comfort the good German and pat him on the back, the closest Spielberg comes to a maudlin Disney touch in which all distinctions are erased in tears. But tears will flow at *Schindler's List*, and for the most part, they are hard-earned by Spielberg's movie. It couldn't be better. It could be worse.

I N P R I N T

Two years ago, Katie Roiphe ignited controversy with a *New York Times* op-ed piece denouncing the “neo-Puritanism” of campus rape activists. Earlier this fall, she again struck a nerve with *The Morning After: Sex, Fear and Feminism on Campus* (Little, Brown, \$19.95), a book length expansion and elaboration of her earlier argument. When excerpts of the book were published as a *New York Times Magazine* cover story this June, the magazine received numerous letters of protest. For decrying what she called “rape hype” as a betrayal of feminism, Roiphe (now a graduate student at Princeton) was herself denounced as a traitor to the feminist cause.

Much of the feminist criticism of the book has focused on Roiphe’s claim that the actual incidence of rape has been drastically inflated by campus activists for political reasons. As her critics have convincingly demonstrated, Roiphe’s argument on this point is both misleading and misinformed; unencumbered by any real evidence, she “rebutts” figures indicating that one out of every four women is the victim of rape or attempted rape by noting that there is no indication among *her* friends that the rate is so high.

Given the polemical nature of Roiphe’s work, it is not surprising that her critics—from Susan Faludi in *Newsweek* to Katha Pollitt in *The New Yorker*—have responded with polemics of their own. In this section, we attempt to go beyond the polemics, to explore the divergent reactions the



The Morning After: a debate

book has elicited among feminists attempting to grapple with the complex issues of sexuality and sexual violence.

Leora Tanenbaum suggests that the current preoccupation of campus activists with the issue of rape reflects a larger impasse in feminism. Liza Featherstone argues that Roiphe, while appealing in some ways to those women who resist ideologically driven restrictions on their sexuality, is herself unwilling to explore her own feelings and fears with the same honesty she demands of others. Katharine Greider contrasts her own experiences as an undergraduate at Princeton with what she sees as Roiphe’s disingenuous caricature of contemporary campus activism.

—David Futrelle

Photographs by David Schulz

The feminist mistake

By Leora Tanenbaum

Criticism from a well-meaning friend or colleague—an “insider”—stings, but is generally respected and accepted. Criticism from an “outsider,” however, makes one bristle—and is more easily perceived as an attack. *Why should I listen to her? What does she really know, anyway?* Such has largely been the feminist response to Katie Roiphe’s denunciation of what she calls “rape crisis” feminism—that is, the feminist faction, most visible on college campuses, that defines rape expansively and promotes the belief that all men are natural aggressors. Her thesis is that these feminists are doing a disservice to women by implicitly characterizing themselves as victims in all sexual scenarios.

Roiphe’s relation to feminism frames the issue: she simultaneously embraces both outsider and insider status. Because she writes with an air of objectivity, she is able to marshal public cultural discourse through speaking engagements and news show stints. At the same time, her youth and student status lend credibility to her eyewitness accounts of campus feminism in a way that most “objective” reporters can rarely achieve.

As a result, the news media can barely contain their excitement: Roiphe both critiques feminism and castigates the irresponsibility of twentysomethings—an irresistible combination. *Newsweek*’s “Sexual Correctness” issue devoted nine pages to the subject. The editors mapped the argument in terms of one-dimensional yes-or-no questions (is Roiphe liberal or conservative? brilliant or misguided?), and rounded up knee-jerk pundits to advance each side. Susan Faludi categorically dismissed Roiphe, Mary Matalin embraced her, and the editors desperately tried to maintain an even-handed tone.

Roiphe’s portrayal of feminism is itself one-dimensional, a caricature of a monolithic—and fearsome—movement that lacks internal dissent. Roiphe ignores the thousands of campus feminists who do engage positively with issues of sexuality—for example, those who are primarily devoted to pro-choice activism. And they, in turn, have dismissed her as reactionary.

Nonetheless, to conclude that raising the issue of sexual correctness is just another example of anti-feminist backlash is a serious mistake. Roiphe has nudged us to examine the mechanisms of feminist orthodoxy, exposing its paradoxical foundation through anecdotes and interviews with feminists at various colleges.

Many of her stories resonate with my own experience. I was an undergraduate at Brown University when the notori-

ous “rape list” appeared on a bathroom wall. You may remember reading about the list several years ago in the *New York Times*. When it first appeared, I was working as a research assistant for a professor on the second floor of the Rockefeller Library. It was hot and my work was slow-paced; between the air conditioning and the coffee, I became well acquainted with the women’s bathroom.

At first there was just a single name inside the door of the second stall on the left side: “X is a rapist. Report the animal.” Over the course of the summer, a few more names were added, with similar warnings. In September the list swelled. By November, there were at least 30 names. The administration discovered it and ordered that the door be freshly painted. The list reappeared, the anger of its authors impossible to miss. “Quit erasing this list!” “Why is this list the only graffiti on campus routinely washed away?” The door was painted again; the list appeared again. Everyone seemed to know someone on it. My friends and I whispered about the names. “Is it true about Y?” “Don’t go out with Z.”

But something happened to the character of the list as it expanded. Harassers and assaulters began to be lumped in with rapists. It wasn’t clear who had done what. “Did he rape her, or just pinch her? Feel her up? Make a rude comment?” The definition of “rape” was stretched so wide that it even included day-to-day sexism that, while by no means innocent or forgivable, was not a threat to anyone’s physical safety.

A close friend of mine, ironically one of the most feminist men I know, was deemed dangerous because on one occasion he made an awkward and intrusive pass at his date at a party. Although he was rebuffed and went no further, his name was added to the top 10 list of men to watch out for. This in itself was humiliating and unjust; but it was nothing compared to what followed. My friend’s accuser took her complaint of sexual assault to Brown’s internal judicial organization, which ultimately decided that there was not enough evidence for a disciplinary council hearing. Nevertheless, he was named as a sexual assaulter on the front page of the *Brown Daily Herald*. His social life was irreparably crippled for the duration of his study at Brown.

Lest one argue that the extremism of some feminists at Brown was singular and unduplicated, consider the proliferating sexual conduct codes at colleges across the country—the most publicized one at Antioch College in Ohio, which insists upon “clear verbal consent” not just for sexual intercourse but for all other sexual acts, including kissing. Consider the popularity of anti-pornography feminism, an attempt to “save” women from male lust.

Consider, finally, the many recent publications that establish guidelines to avoid rape. They argue that women must protect themselves, in all social encounters with men, from a constant threat of assault. In one recent book, *Date Rape: The Secret Epidemic*, the authors counsel, “Avoid allowing a man to touch or get too close before the relationship has developed very far.” And rebels are out as well:

"Avoid men who disregard laws and established rules. Men who knowingly break laws and behave without regard for the rights of others are at risk for doing the same sexually." (Unlike women, I presume, who are better able to limit anti-establishment impulses to non-sexual acts.)

Feminist preoccupation with the dangers of male sexuality has not, of course, emerged out of nowhere. During the Progressive era, suffragettes often relied in their rhetoric upon 19th-century stereotypes of female asexuality and male sexual immorality. A similar wariness returned in the second wave of feminist activism in the '60s and '70s. In 1974, Robin Morgan proposed in her famous article "Theory and Practice: Pornography and Rape" that "[r]ape exists any time sexual intercourse occurs when it has not been initiated by the woman, out of her own genuine affection and desire. ... It might not be a knife-blade against her throat; it can be in his body language, his threat of sulking, his clenched or trembling hands, his angry put-down or silent self-pity at being rejected." Sulking? Trembling hands? Silent self-pity? These ploys are manipulative, but hardly overpowering, and they are definitely not the sole province of men.

Catharine MacKinnon exemplifies the hyperbole par excellence. Roiphe cites her: "Politically, I call it rape whenever the woman feels violated." By this definition, any sexual encounter a woman is unhappy about becomes rape, and the concept becomes diluted to the point that it becomes almost meaningless.

Why do the arguments of this feminist faction have so much resonance with young women today? For one thing, the reductionist model of gender oppression helps to promote a sense of feminist community by obscuring differences among women. By theorizing that men and male institutions have a monopoly on domination and violence, "rape crisis" feminists elide the shameful truth that many women are complicit in keeping other women down. Despite a popular feminist belief that women's leadership style is inherently collaborative and intuitive—in contrast to a presumed "male" style of greed, hierarchy and self-interest—women in positions of authority can be just as exploitative as men. The fact is that in a society predicated on the unequal distribution of limited resources, violence and power manipulation would exist even if women *were* to win the mythic battle of the sexes.

The feminist sense of sisterhood is not entirely illusory, of course. Young women do share similar concerns—among them very real concerns about rape. The risk of rape is four times higher for women aged 16 to 24 than for any other group. Half of all men arrested for rape are 24 years old or younger. And a quarter of all male college students in the United States and Canada admitted in a 1984 study that they would rape a woman if they could get away with it.

That there is a problem is not in doubt. The question is what to *do* about it. To my mind, the most fruitful approach would be to analyze the sources of male rage in order to try to eliminate it—a complicated endeavor that

will not yield any easy answers. Blaming men and masculinity categorically, on the other hand, is a quick-fix solution, reminiscent of the way self-described "codependents" blame all their problems on their dysfunctional families. Not only does such an approach demonize many of our partners and friends, but it also stunts our own sense of self-determination and agency.

Like their close cousins, anti-pornography feminists, "rape crisis" feminists generate activism through personal testimony, a rhetorical device that provides the speaker with a moral high ground. The testimony demonstrates the danger of male sexual violence in a way that is nearly impossible to refute without appearing insensitive or even anti-feminist. The subjective experience of an assaulted woman (a "survivor," in vocabulary borrowed from the self-help movement) becomes the highest truth; it becomes emblematic of the experiences of *all* women. This is an ironic tactic. In the '70s, white, middle-class feminists were criticized for universalizing their problems. This new crop of feminists tends to lack a sense of that history, and so have fallen into the same trap.

But orthodoxies cannot live on moral superiority alone. The pedantic discourse of Take Back the Night marches and open-mike forums belies an admirably savvy understanding of how feminist voices get heard in a moment when feminism is not taken seriously by most people, including women. (Only 33 percent of women embrace the term "feminist," according to a recent poll.) Unable to drum up media attention (or even much campus activism) over issues of economic and social inequality, campus feminists have discovered that sexual crisis is a certain attention grabber.

Young women today have very legitimate reasons to feel angry, anxious and afraid about their futures. If they are heterosexual, the choices of when or whether to marry or to have children will impact their career in a way that men's choices do not. College women soon discover that despite many advances in the 25 years since the emergence of the second wave of feminism, sexism still pervades the workplace. Nearly 75 percent of full-time working women, for example, earn less than \$20,000 a year, compared to 37 percent of men. And even though active fatherhood is purportedly on the rise, active male homemaking is not: women do 70 percent of the housework, even when employed full time outside the home.

Old patterns therefore inevitably repeat themselves. Married women who decide to have children tend to choose careers with flexible hours, or stay at home with a child its first few years. And rather than providing substantive analysis about the delicate balancing act between career and family, liberal feminism has told women simply that they can "have it all"—that, in fact, they *must* have it all.

With such an onus, is it any wonder that some young women might sublimate their fears about the future into a kind of sexual hysteria? Unconsciously, the "rape crisis" activists seek to prolong a state of dependence. By expansively defining rape and pointing to male sexuality as the

essence of sexist oppression, rape crisis feminists characterize themselves as vulnerable prey, thereby abrogating responsibility for their actions.

Finally, here is a feminist dilemma for which step-by-step guidelines *can* be crafted and to which college administrators, even reporters, listen. Rape crisis feminists, then, may be regarded as radicals who are contesting the expectations of liberal feminism, which has placed a heavy burden on their shoulders—and told them they should be grateful for it. ◀

Leora Tanenbaum has written on gender and culture for *The Nation*, *Z* magazine and the *Women's Review of Books*.

Fear and desire

By Liza Featherstone

Like Camille Paglia, Katie Roiphe presents herself as a brave dissenter from an imagined feminist mainstream and its uptight, "neo-Puritan" mores; like Paglia, she knows how well her protest will sell.

In *The Morning After*, Roiphe argues that feminism is responsible for a climate of fear on college campuses nationwide. Rape awareness programs—and particularly recently broadened definitions of harassment and rape—have, she claims, created a "date-rape hype" that exaggerates the risks of sexual assault and, even more perniciously, infantilizes and desexualizes women.

Roiphe's portrait of feminism as a new kind of Puritanism is, to put it mildly, exaggerated and misleading. In fact, feminists do discuss—and disagree about—sex and sexuality quite a bit; it is simply hard to find much evidence of that conversation in the mainstream book market.

Women who share the feminist lust for equality yet shy away from some of its repressive tendencies do need to know that there are theoretical and political alternatives to Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin. Unfortunately, reading Roiphe's book won't help, as she makes no attempt to include them. Her catalogue of neo-Puritan crimes against pleasure makes no mention of "pro-sex" writers like Ellen Willis, Gail Rubin, Alice Echols or Susie Bright.

Roiphe does not seem to realize that, right now, two of the most prominent issues for young feminists are abortion and queer liberation, which (let's not be too lofty about this) are essentially about the right to be sexual. Nor does she show any interest in the cultural phenomena that would surround her if she ever left Princeton, N.J.: the new abundance of angry and sexually explicit 'zines created by and for young women, the growing numbers of all-girl hard-rock bands, lesbian porn magazines like *On Our Backs*, or the nationwide proliferation of "baby dykes" who pierce their nipples and belly buttons and dance in places with names like the Clit Club.

Pro-sex feminists need to pay attention to Katie Roiphe, even though she clearly has not given us a passing thought, because most of us are a little like her. We get mad when other people try to explain our experience to us, or tell us what we should want. Part of the reason the feminist



movement—like the gay movement—is so frequently crippled by infighting is that they challenge the most intimate and personal aspects of our lives and draw on very private experiences.

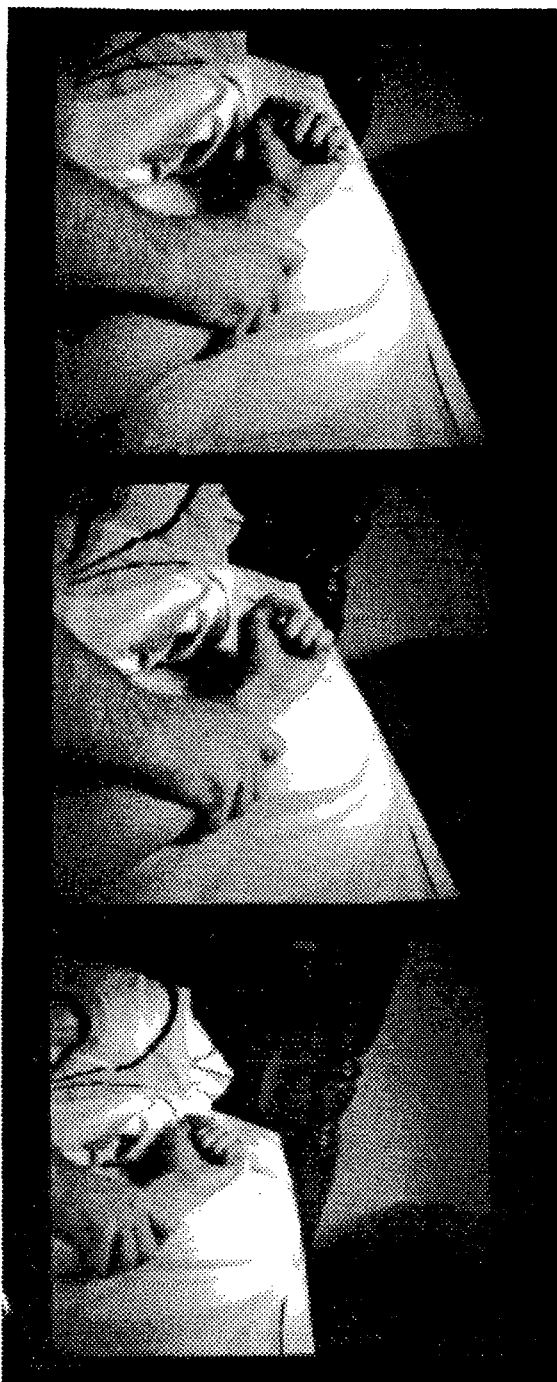
It's very difficult to get people to agree on anything related to sex, and at some level no one wants any elite theorist or loud-mouthed activist to speak for her sexuality. Most feminists can probably identify with her rejection of other women's attempts to define and categorize her life. When Roiphe writes that she feels like feminist discourse on sex is a "Mad Tea Party" with no seat for her, we sympathize, a little.

This struggle to reconcile—or not to reconcile—one's own intimate experience with collective interpretation, the difficulty of putting the personal to public purpose, is familiar to anyone who has ever thought about sexual politics. All useful thought and action on these issues comes out of this kind of uncomfortable negotiation.

Katie Roiphe appeals to us a little because her need to question orthodoxy, her need to bring her own life into theory, is our own. Maybe we've had incest dreams but don't think we actually experienced it. Maybe we like sexual comments from strangers—at least some strangers. Perhaps we look at the date-rape education poster that says "Rape is not about sex, it's about power" (as if there was some obvious distinction to be made), and all we can say is: you must have a very orderly life.

So we often end up feeling drawn to women who protest that their experience doesn't fit feminist paradigms. Most of us understand the feeling of being mired in contradictions. But what is the alternative? If you think feminist sexual discourse is constricting, try patriarchy for a while—from the misogynist certainties of old-fashioned psychoanalysis to the retro pragmatism of *How to Make Love to a Man*.

Ironically, Roiphe is unable to apply to herself the same kind of psychological honesty she demands of others. The part of her experience that Roiphe most wants shielded from feminist interpretation is the part that might suggest



that she could be a victim, that someone else could have power over her. On non-violent sexual coercion, she writes:

The idea that women can't withstand verbal pressure infantilizes them. ... We should not nurture this woman on her back, her will so mutable ... we are not this woman. ... All competent female college students are compromised by the association of gullibility, low self-esteem and the inability to assert ourselves in relation to men.

Roiphe, clearly, doesn't want to identify with weakness. Again, we're sympathetic. We pretend we can't imagine why women stay in abusive relationships, or put up with harassment at work. Why didn't Anita Hill just find another job? We don't like to think about the economic, social and emotional power that men can have over women. Even if we acknowledge some inequality, we want to be exceptions. Back in school, we despised the girl in our seminars who prefaced everything she said with, "This is probably really dumb, but...." We hate fragility, because we're afraid it has something to do with us.

What's unfortunate is that Roiphe never explores that fear; she never asks why she is so angry at such a small and relatively beleaguered group of peo-

ple as campus rape activists. She has a typically American, typically capitalist contempt for losers—and an even more American terror of becoming one.

Roiphe, like Paglia, poses as a bad girl. But I dare her, and all of us, to be much badder, to forge a feminist sexual politics that reflects the complexity of human experience. To do that we have to transcend both the hackneyed image of the victimized damsel *and* the image of the untouchable rebel. We have to face the contradictory truths of all of our lives.

◀
Liza Featherstone, a research assistant at *Ms.* magazine, has written for *The Nation*, *Lies of Our Times* and other publications.

Victor feminism

By Katharine Greider

To read *The Morning After*, you'd think that nothing really bad ever happens to women on campus. Campus feminists, Katie Roiphe says, are obsessed with issues like date rape, sexual harassment and pornography because they long to regulate social behavior and to gain power by exaggerating their own victimization, by projecting their own fear and sexual confusion onto a largely benign environment.

What we have in Roiphe is a "feminist" who attributes the current concern with date rape to a "crisis in sexual identity," who claims that even to talk of sexual harassment is a way of "displac[ing] adolescent uneasiness onto the environment, onto professors, onto older men." Roiphe argues that campus feminists are so wrapped up in playing the victim that they end up encouraging women to see themselves as absurdly delicate. We should be able to censure offending men, she insists, without "crying into our pillow [sic] or screaming for help or counseling."

Life on campus is not always quite as gentle as Roiphe describes it. During my first week at college—I was an undergraduate at Princeton at roughly the same time as Roiphe was an undergraduate at Harvard—a man hoisted me over his shoulder and his friend bit me on the behind, leaving a nasty bruise. This apparently was a game of theirs, and I was not its only prop. I did not cry into my pillow or seek counseling, nor did I report anyone. I kicked and swung. But they only laughed.

Other women faced similar harassment. Some of the intimidation was devastatingly personal—like when the boyfriend of a friend of mine came into her room drunk one night and called her a slut and said he'd like to smash her head against a wall. And there were the impersonal, institutional threats: like "Rape and Pillage Night" at one of the all-male eating clubs.

We fought back against this kind of intimidation with Take Back the Night marches (which Roiphe describes as grotesque festivals of victimization). During a march one spring, a few hundred of us wound our way through campus. When we reached Prospect Street, we were greeted by a banner that read: "The night belongs to Michelob—and men"; by shouts of "Get raped," "Fuck the women's center," and sundry other obscenities.

This reaction was startling, and scary. But we didn't give up; the last thing we wanted was to be victims—we wanted to be victors. The goal of feminism is not simply to identify oppression and leave it at that—to find oneself defeated and cry, aha!—but to *end* it. The women and men who marched that spring night in Princeton planned a second march, which drew hundreds more than the first, including prominent figures in the town and the university. That

night we made clear that we, the marchers, were in the mainstream—and that the relatively few warped young men who had opposed the first march were on the fringe. They had expected the community to support them; instead, the community was telling *them* to change.

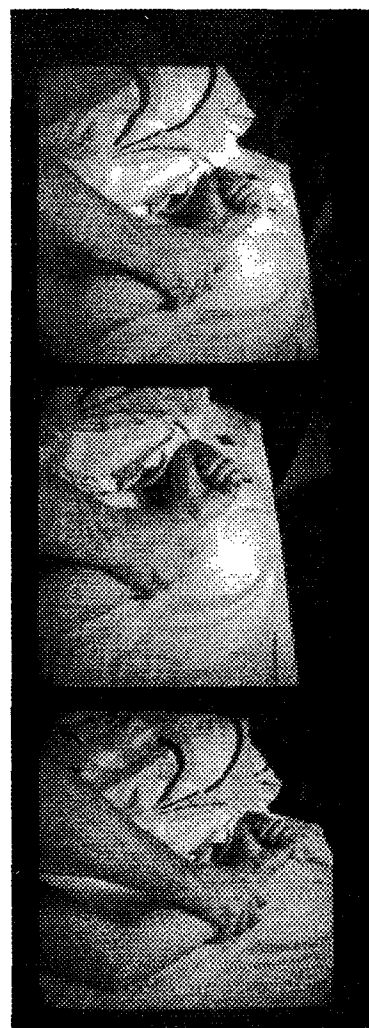
Roiphe misses the point, and I think she misses it on purpose. She explains that she wrote her book because she believes that "some feminisms are better than others." But the only good feminism she mentions is that of an older generation. Her mother—feminist writer Anne Roiphe—taught her to stand up for herself, to refuse to be deferential to men. Looking back on my own childhood, I share Roiphe's nostalgia for our mothers' groundbreaking, gutsy early feminism. But to embrace today the principles they fought for two and three decades ago does not require any particular courage.

Feminism doesn't stand still; in many ways it is today as Roiphe herself perceived it as a little girl, "something like a train you could catch and ride to someplace better." We've gotten into universities, clubs and workplaces. Now we need to rid them of acquaintance rape, sexual harassment and other forms of sexual bullying.

Roiphe speaks for those who want that train to stop where it is, who honor the achievements of their mothers but attack the feminism of their peers. She adds a new twist to what Betty Friedan has called the "I'm-not-a-feminist-but generation," referring to those young women who generally agree with the feminist agenda, but decline to wear its label. Roiphe wears the label, but she strips it of its meaning.

She has a right to her opinions about feminism on campus. But I too am entitled to call it like I see it. Roiphe, whatever she chooses to call herself, is no friend of feminism. And it is for precisely this reason that her ideas will be wildly popular.

Katharine Greider is a freelance writer based in New York.



Fetal attraction

By Phyllis Eckhaus

Popular science has unleashed the Unborn. Like an army of the Undead, these tiny body-snatchers threaten to enslave their human hostages. The pregnant woman's body is not her own; it is protected property, a fetal life preserve.

At Women's Expense: State Power and the Politics of Fetal Rights is a passionate indictment of efforts to subjugate women to fetuses. Cynthia Daniels' closely reasoned yet immensely readable polemic exposes the savage ignorance behind fetal protection policies promulgated under the guise of benevolence.

For the presumed good of the fetus, women have been literally ripped open against their will. Daniels describes the handful of successful suits by hospitals to force Cesareans on women who don't want them. In one case, a pregnant woman who resisted such surgery was cuffed and bound to the four corners of the bed; her irate husband had to be removed from the hospital by seven security guards. In another instance, a woman dying of cancer had her death hastened by court-ordered surgery to "save" her 25-week fetus—which, in the end, did not survive.

Moreover, the "science" supporting these surgical misadventures is hardly foolproof. Electronic fetal monitors are incredibly inaccurate; three out of four diagnoses of "fetal distress" are wrong. Prevailing prejudices only compound the scientific scapegoating of women. According to current wisdom, even moderate drinking by a pregnant woman puts her unborn at great risk. That generations of healthy Europeans have been born to women who wine and dine during their pregnancies hardly deters the uterine police. Daniels' review of the research confirms common sense: moderate use of alcohol becomes a danger to the fetus only when the woman does not get enough good food to eat.

Those who construe these women-vs.-fetus cases as a Solomonic wrestling match of equivalent moral imperatives should think again. In American law, the right to bodily integrity is paramount. Suspected criminals cannot be forced into surgery to give evidence—such as the telltale bullet received in battle—against themselves. Accused rapists cannot be forced to take AIDS tests. And even when someone's life is at stake, relatives cannot be forced into donating organs. That pregnant women should forfeit this most basic right is a legal anomaly illustrating women's still tenuous

claims to full citizenship.

As Barbara Duden shows in her collection of essays, *Disembodying Women: Perspectives on Pregnancy and the Unborn*, women often buy into these regressive fetal fantasies. In one essay, Duden tells the poignant story of Joanne, a typist at a local university. After inviting Duden and several other women friends to her home in a trailer park, Joanne passed around a postcard-sized Polaroid showing "a cloud-like pattern in three or four shades of gray"—a sonogram of the contents of Joanne's belly. Divorced, far from her parents, working at an insecure job, Joanne had not, until she saw the sonogram, wanted a second child. But the doctors told her that the cloud-like pattern was a human being, so she dubbed it John and gave up on the idea of abortion.

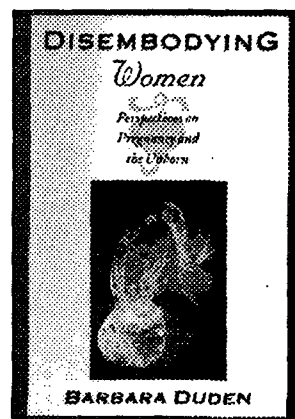
Duden, a historian, is appalled by this monstrous modern phenomenon: women in thrall to fetuses. In a series of odd but fascinating essays, she links this serfdom to what she sees as the peculiar limits of the contemporary mind: the sanctification of science and technology; the increasing importance of images over experience; the simultaneous affirmation of "life" and denigration of living.

Duden's purpose is to disorient her reader, to create the intellectual equivalent of a bungee jump off of a 20th-century precipice.

She plunges into the vastly different world of Johann Storch, a town physician in 18th-century Germany whose women patients foretold their pregnancies through the flux and feel of their "humours." They asked Storch to prescribe remedies for them and, with his help, these women would either "quicken" or would expel untoward "fruit" from their wombs. Either outcome was satisfactory and deemed consonant with nature.

Storch's patients had lice, oozing sores and disturbingly short lives—still, Duden envies them their autonomy and self-awareness. By her reckoning, we modern women have literally "lost touch," sensing our surroundings and even our physical selves through received images: photographs, television, X-rays, sonograms. Duden urges women to recapture at least some of our own "autonomous aliveness." ◀

Phyllis Eckhaus is a writer living in Brooklyn.



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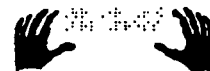
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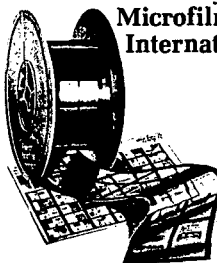
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were both long dead before I was even born, and I've spent more time listening to the Dead Kennedys than I have pondering Camelot lost.

Nor have I ever had the faintest interest in the Warren Commission. For a great many of an older generation, dismantling the methodology and conclusions of the Commission was almost a political rite of passage, the first recognition that their government did not always tell the truth. But my first political memories were Watergate, not Camelot; I grew up in an era in which it was simply assumed that government lied about what it did and covered up when it was caught. It never even occurred to me to think that the Warren Commissioners had made an honest and unbiased attempt to uncover the truth.

Of course, being a naturally cynical sort, I've always looked upon the various conspiracy theories with the same sort of skepticism. The wilder conspiracy theories—involving everyone from LBJ and the military-industrial complex to the personnel director at the Texas School Book Depository—are obviously absurd fantasies, based on “evidence” far flimsier than anything ever advanced by supporters of the Warren Report: imposter Oswalds, switched corpses, underground tunnels, artificial shrubbery, dart-shooting umbrellas. “When people cease to trust the authorities,” Christopher Hitchens has noted, “they often become not more skeptical but more credulous.”

When I have read up on the subject, I've done so reluctantly, more out of a sense of duty than anything else. And I've worried, just a bit, that some of the obsessiveness of the conspiracy theorists might rub off on me. Conspiracy theory seems like a kind of addictive drug. Starting with a few innocent questions about the firing characteristics of Mannlicher-Carcano rifles, the buffs move on to the harder stuff—reading Jim Garrison and the *Grassy Knoll Gazette*, going over the individual frames of the Zapruder film with a magnifying glass, building scale-model replicas of Dealey Plaza in the basement.

But the new Oswald vogue has definitely piqued my interest; for the first time I can read about the assassination without embarrassment or disgust, and without fear of being slowly and irrevocably entangled in a web of endless speculation. I've been particularly intrigued by Posner's book, not only a fascinating account of Oswald's troubled life but a convincing refutation of all the major conspiracy theories. (The less-than-major conspiracy theories refute themselves.) After years of avoiding the subject, I've now begun to natter knowingly (and perhaps obsessively) to my friends about bullet trajectories, Officer Tippit and Oswald's one-man Fair Play for Cuba committee. I've become, as it were, a lone-nut nut.

Posner is not necessarily the best spokesman for his cause. In interviews, he comes across as a bit too slick for his own good. And Posner has an ax to grind, taking more than a few unseemly ideological swipes at some of the conspiracy buffs—“many of whom,” he ominously suggests,

are “admitted leftists.” Even the title of his book—*Case Closed*—is likely, in all its blunt arrogance, to infuriate his opponents rather than to win converts among the buffs.

Generally, though, the response of critics to the book has been enthusiastic. Part of this new interest stems from Posner's detailed and rigorous handling of the evidence. And it's likely that many share the desire for closure implicit in Posner's title.

But the new fascination with Oswald also stems from the belated recognition that Oswald—not Kennedy, and not any of the hundreds of alleged conspirators—is the most interesting part of the case. “One explanation for his vogue,” Tom Carson suggests in the *Village Voice*, “is that he's the perfect antihero—half Charlie Starkweather, half Walter Mitty.” And perhaps, Carson goes on to observe, “we're now ... ready to see Oswald, whose career literally defied logic, as more representative of what was afoot in American society back then than John Kennedy was.”

I'll buy that. Oswald was both a radical and an individualist, an eccentric, self-made rebel whose penchant for “mystery-making” (as one friend put it) was nurtured by espionage novels and an instructional manual titled *How to Be a Spy*. He was, in short, as American as apple pie—a far better symbol of the mad and violent originality that is America than the faux-aristocratic JFK. On that November 22, Kennedy was just a prop; it was Oswald's day to nudge himself into history. ▲

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I N T H E E N D

Flogging a dead Kennedy

By David Futrelle

The big news from the 30th anniversary Kennedy assassination extravaganza is that Lee Harvey Oswald is back in style. After years of neglect—relegated by the various conspiracy buffs to little more than a bewildered bystander to the dramatic events of Nov. 22, 1963—Oswald has again returned to the center of the assassination narrative. Just two years ago, in Oliver Stone's *JFK*, the lone eccentric was forced to wait out the assassination in the School Book Depository lunchroom while a team of professional sharpshooters did the job upstairs.

This year, *Frontline* devoted three hours to answering the question, "Who was Lee Harvey Oswald?"; Gerald Posner's massive *Case Closed* probed his life in detail; even *The Nation* ran a major article arguing that Oswald not only did the deed himself, but did it for politically comprehensible (if not defensible) reasons, as a way of striking back at Kennedy's undeclared war on Castro.

The new focus on Oswald has arisen just as some old-time conspiracy buffs have begun to question their now-ancient obsession. While not necessarily giving in to the "lone nut" theory, some of the buffs have just plain given up. "In the past, I've done my share of conspiracy buffing," wrote Mick Farren in the *Los Angeles Reader*, "but I feel that this 30-year mark has to be the moment to come out and admit that I no longer care who killed the president."

Some of us, of course, have never really cared. In the past, I've tried my best to avoid the subject altogether. Perhaps my distaste for the assassination rituals is a generational thing: Kennedy and Oswald

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